

ADVERTISING COLE BROS. CIRCUS IN 1946

# BANDWAGON

The Journal of the Circus Historical Society

JULY - AUGUST 1988

SIG SAUTELLE  
WELSH BROS.  
COMBINED SHOWS LTD.  
A FRENCHIE, IMPRING, SPECTACULAR EXHIBITION  
AFTERNOON & EVENING AT 8:30  
WILL EXHIBIT HERE  
TUESDAY  
SEPTEMBER

26

SEPT 26

WILL EXHIBIT HERE  
TUESDAY  
SEP. 26  
SIG SAUTELLE  
AND  
WELSH BROS.  
COMBINED SHOWS LTD.  
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26

SIG SAUTELLE & WELSH BROS.  
COMBINED SHOWS

# The Journal of the **BANDWAGON** Circus Historical Society

Vol. 32, No. 4

JULY-AUGUST 1988

FRED D. PFENING, JR., EDITOR

Fred D. Pfening III, Managing Editor - Joseph T. Bradbury, Associate Editor **BANDWAGON**, The Journal of the Circus Historical Society (USPS 406-390) (ISS N 0005 4968), is published bi-monthly. Second class postage paid at Columbus, OH. Editorial, advertising and circulation office is located at 2515 Dorset Rd., Columbus, OH 43221. Phone (614) 294-5361. Advertising rates are: Full page \$85.00, half page \$45.00, quarter page \$25.00. Minimum ad is \$18.00. The **BANDWAGON** is produced using a Macintosh computer and ReadySetGo softwear.

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CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY-Fred D. Pfening III, President, 2315 Haverford Rd., Columbus, OH 43220; Greg Parkinson, Vice President, 426 Water St., Baraboo, WI 53913; Mrs. Johann W. Dahlinger, Secretary-Treasurer, 743 Beverly Park Place, Jackson, MI 49203.

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## THIS MONTH'S COVER

In September of 1905 Sig Sautelle and John Welsh combined forces to operate a circus that toured for only thirty-two days. The show opened in Rochester, Pennsylvania on September 6 and closed in Quarryville, Pennsylvania on October 7. The partnership was dissolved after the closing.

The gigantic bill stand on our cover was posted somewhere in West Virginia. The available route shows September 26 as open, the show was in Davis, West Virginia the next day. It is interesting to note that the only paper with both names are the horizontal streamers; all other paper had been used by either the Sautelle or Welsh show.

The composition of this large daub shows the artistic talents of the billposters, making a totally balanced over all design. The proud billposters posed after completing their work. Original photo in Pfening Archives.

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1966-Jan.-Feb., Sept.-Oct.  
1967-July-Aug., Sept.-Oct., Nov.-Dec.  
1968-All but Jan.-Feb.  
1969-Jan.-Feb., July-Aug., Sept.-Oct.  
1970-All but July-Aug., Sept.-Oct.  
1971-All but May-June  
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James H. Dotzenroth 190 Acorn Dr. Warminster, PA 18974	3391	The line listing back issue sales of the <i>Bandwagon</i> was omitted from the financial statement published in the May-June issue. The amount of income from back issue sales was \$2,508.75.	
Rusty Casto 2187 21st St. Nitro, W. VA 25143	3392	<b>ADDRESS CHANGES</b>	
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# ADVERTISING Cole Bros. Circus THE 1946 SEASON BY JACK S. SMITH

Jack S. Smith began his career in the circus business when he joined out as a lithographer on the advance advertising car of the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus in 1938. In 1939 he followed Verne A. Williams, the Hagenbeck car manager, to Cole Bros. Circus. He worked on the Cole advance car again in 1940. Following his Army career he again joined the Cole bill car as a lithographer in 1943. He was appointed boss lithographer in 1946.

**A**s a background to this article on the activities of the Cole Bros. Circus advance advertising car a brief outline concerning all of the advance work follows.

Acting on reports from contracting agents the general agent first selected the cities to be played. The contracting agents then secured the city licence and the circus grounds, contracted the space on the local billboards and ordered feed, fuel, bread, water and gasoline.

Next came a member of the press department who visited the radio stations, city hall, public school officials, police department and other officials throughout the county, arranging a special events program. He was followed by the banner brigade who tacked colored cloth banners on high buildings. Two weeks ahead of the show date the No. 1 advance advertising car arrived, containing billposters, lithographers and programmers. The contracting press agent on board the car purchased advertising space and furnished editors with preliminary publicity, stories and photographs.

The No. 1 car also served as a "mother car" for a number of trucks, each with a crew of billposters and lithographers who billed the country roads and small towns within a radius of twenty to sixty miles. These units traveled overland during the night, arriving with the car early in the morning.

Next to arrive was the No. 2 brigade, traveling by truck. This crew of about eight men carried on the work started by the No. 1 car. In some cases they jumped ahead of the No. 1 car, especially if there was opposition from another

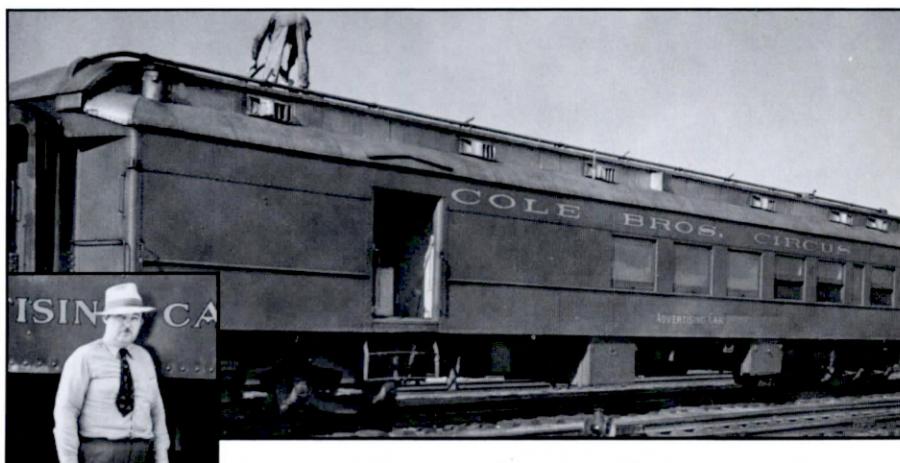
show. Their schedule was more or less a secret in order to protect the show against another circus contemplating playing the same city.

The No. 2 car arrived a week ahead of the show. This crew of around six placed window cards about the city, distributed heralds and courier booklets and repaired the torn banners on buildings and re-posted storm-whipped billposting.

A few days ahead of the show date an-

loading crossing for the show train, the delivery on the grounds of the supplies previously contracted for, plan the route for hauling the wagons from the railroad siding to the grounds, inspect bridges and culverts, and take care of many other last minute details necessary for the arrival of the show into town.

The No. 1 advance advertising car of Cole Bros. Circus in 1946 was under the managerial command of veteran



other press agent, or story man, arrived to put the last touches on newspapers just prior to the arrival of the show.

Next to arrive in town was the national advertising representative who contracted for cloth merchandise advertising banners to be hung inside the big top and used on the backs of elephants during the performance. These were lettered by the show painter the morning of show day.

About this time the advertising inspector arrived. It was his duty to check all advertising paper on buildings and in store windows to see that none of it had been covered or destroyed and to approve or void the admission tickets left in payment for the use of the space at each location.

The last to arrive was the 24 hour man. It was his job to arrange the un-

The Cole Bros. Circus No. 1 advance advertising car in 1947. It was painted the same in 1945, 46 and 47. Stensvad photo. The insert shows car manager Jim Gephart. Herb Hoyt photo.

James A. Gephart. Gephart was a lithographer on the 1937 Cole Bros. No. 1 advance car and by 1941 was boss lithographer. In 1942 he was manager of the banner brigade and in 1943 managed the Cole No. 2 car, returning to manager of the banner brigade in 1943.

He assumed the position of car manager in 1945. Gephart remained manager of the No. 1 car through 1947. He was general agent of Cole Bros. Circus in 1948.

Following the auction of the Col. Tim McCoy Wild West show in Washington, D. C. in 1938 Cole show owners Zack Terrell and Jess Adkins purchased the new steel advertising car that had been used by that show. The

**COLE BROS. CIRCUS—1**

(INCORPORATED)

**Lithograph No 6810**I have this day leased to the above named shows exclusive  
privileges to display.....Lithographs at No. .... street  
and to remain undisturbed until after the date of the above  
named shows at.....In consideration of the above  
I have received an order bearing the number and date  
to this contract which will pass ONE person. **THIS ORDER IS NOT TRANSFERABLE** and no other Lithographs  
will be allowed on my.....  
until after the date above named.

Owner or Agent

**Cole Bros. Circus - 1**

(INCORPORATED)

**Lithograph Order**

On presentation of this order you will receive ONE admission only to Cole Bros. Circus in consideration of the exclusive privilege of displaying lithographs on buildings at..... St. City of.....

until date of Circus.....

**Good Only**  
**On**.....THIS ORDER IS NOT TRANSFERABLE and is void if bought or sold and  
has no money value; is void when used for purpose other than designated. In  
no case will it be accepted unless the contract for which it was given has been  
carried out.

Federal and State Tax Must Be Paid on Admission

Agent

**For One (1)**  
**Admission**

The boss lithographer and boss billposter also oversaw the "circusing" of the multi-sheet pictorial paper. This was known in the trade as "moving pictures." Circusing of lithos was necessary to assure that each lithographer's hod [bundle] carried numerous designs of each size. The responsibility of daily lithograph hod makeup and that of posting paper hods was also a part of the bosses jobs. The tail dating process of pictorial lithographs [window work] fell on the individual lithographers on a daily morning basis before they hit the streets. The variety of paper would be fanned out face down on a work table in the car so only one inch at the bottom was exposed and spread with paste prior to the tails [dates] being placed on each sheet.

A lithographer's hod normally contained 165 sheets of various sizes, styles and date sheets. The daily posting hods were similarly made up much the same way and were comprised of approximately 1500 sheets of posting paper, plus dates. The posting paper ranged in size from three to twenty-four sheets, either 3 or 4 sheet high plus two high streamers. The boss banner man's duties were similar to the other two bosses. The show used a colorful variety of cloth banner pictorials in the tacking of wall work. The banners were the only designs that were reused. The boss lithographer and boss bill poster served as the "main street" or "high polish" workers.

The contracting agent contracted with local street car and bus companies for the display of advertising space on their vehicles. Date sheets for this use were delivered from the car in each city.

The boss billposter as a general rule worked daily on the "town truck" with the local sniper, the local town bill

Nine sheet cloth banner used by the Cole show in the middle 1940s. Pfening Archives



car had been remodeled by the McCoy show and was used for only about six weeks during the 1938 season. It contained two offices, two staterooms, a boiler room for making paste, a number of pulldown berths and a large amount of paper storage space. However the car was not pressed into service by the Cole show until around 1941. The McCoy car proved to be one of the finest advertising cars on the road.

In 1946 Gephart appointed me boss lithographer. I had previously served as a lithographer under Gephart. The position of boss lithographer carried many duties. This person was responsible for the inventory of pictorial lithographs used on a daily basis that comprised pictorial panels, half sheet pictorial flats and uprights and one sheet flats and uprights making a total of five styles of pictorial paper used daily by the street lithographers and lithographers covering the country routes. A half sheet is 20 x 28 inches in size, a one sheet is 28 by 42 inches, a two sheet is 56 inches high and 42 inches wide, a 3 sheet is 6 feet 8 inches high and 42 inches wide. The date sheets to match the pictorial sizes were ordered by the general agent from the printing company, in this case the Erie Division of U. S. Printing and Lithographing Co. in Erie, Pennsylvania.

Most of the paper used in 1946 were Erie designs that had been used for a number of years. A few new lithographs were designed and printed by Erie for the 1946 season. The credit line at the bottom of these new sheets read, "Another US Poster." The US Poster line was used on other new bills that had been ordered by the show for the 1944 and 1945 seasons. A new bill had been designed for Hubert Castle's wire act for the 1944 season; it was cross lined with Con Colleano's name in 1945. In 1946 the paper was cross lined with Billy Powell's name. A special design that had been made up for Dorothy Herbert a few years earlier was cross lined with Ruth Nelson's name for the 1946 season.

Although records are not available on

Lithograph ticket order used in 1946. Listed on the left are the number of sheets hung, the address and the signature of the owner. The right half lists the address and the signature of the lithographer. Pfening Archives.

the amount of paper used by the Cole show each day in 1946 a listing of what was used by the Robbins Bros. Circus in 1938 would be similar.

An Erie Lithograph Co. invoice dated May 26, 1938 to the Robbins show listed window work paper for twelve days. Two hundred-forty sheets of each of seven styles and nine hundred-sixty sheets of another style of one sheet flats were used. Three hundred each of three styles and six hundred of another style of one sheet uprights were used. Three hundred sheets of seven styles, six hundred of another, and 1800 of another of half sheet flats were used. Three hundred each of one style and six hundred of another style of half sheet panels were supplied. This indicated that 470 one sheets and 475 half sheets were used each day. The same invoice listed fifty 9 sheet cloth banners.

Another invoice to Robbins Bros. Circus in 1938 showed an average of 1889 sheets posted per day over a typical twelve day period.

The date sheet orders were based on contracted dates and were ordered weeks and in some cases months in advance of the show dates. Shipments of lithographs, posting and cloth [muslin] banner dates were generally sent to the car from the printer by Railway Express every fourteen days. It was the responsibility of both the boss lithographer and the boss billposter to handle their respective departments order for pictorial paper.



This one sheet upright was posted for the Columbus, Ohio date that was cancelled due to the coal strike. Circus World Museum collection.

poster. The downtown daubs and three sheet boards in most large cities were under the control of the local union and the sniper. These daubs were posted on a per sheet cost basis that was paid by the show to insure good billposting coverage in each city. The boss banner man tacked with his crew the "banner hits" that had been contracted for wall work in advance of the arrival of the No. 1 car. The banner crew traveled by truck with the rail car. In many of the large cities the crew might tack 800 to 1,000 sheets of banners. The banners were removed by the banner puller who traveled with the show. If the used banners were in good condition they were returned to the bill car for additional use.

The advance car arrived in a city fourteen days prior to the arrival of the show. On board were a crew of approximately twenty-five men who were members of various locals of the International Alliance of Billposters, Billers and Distributors throughout the United States. Each morning the car manager would distribute a typed sheet to each lithographer that each was required to cover that day along with a book containing one hundred general admission passes.

The billposters were each given their respective country routes laid out in a

40 mile radius of the show stand plus the customary book of one hundred general admission passes. At the end of the work day both the lithographers and the billposters were expected to have "shot their hods" on their respective routes and were not expected to bring paper back to the car, though depending on the lithographer's route, such moves could not at times be helped.

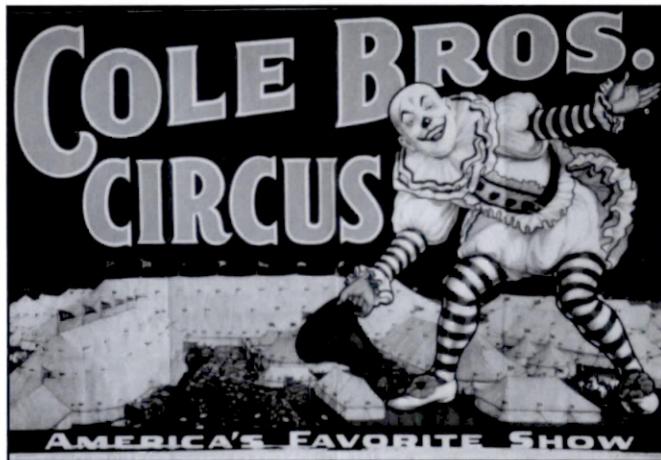
Each lithographer and bill poster was required to fill out a report listing the serial number of the passes issued, the name of the owner, the kind of building, the location, the number of sheets posted and the number of passes issued at each location billed.

The following was listed at the bottom of the Cole Bros. Circus country route report. "Stubs must always be signed by owner of building, and no excuse will be taken for failure to carry out this order. Road daubs not taken and buildings passed up, that the checker-up say could be secured will not be tolerated. Railroad Stations must always be made regardless of what the driver may say as to conditions. The drivers orders are from the billposter and not the billposter from the driver. One daub does not bill a town, and road daubs are often better than town billing. Always be sure that the party signing the stub has the right to give you permission to post. Occasionally there are buildings that continuous billing has made public daubs, and the right to cover which is never questioned. The wise bill poster can always distinguish them from those requiring permission. Don't come to the Car Manager with excuses. Put them in your report for verification by the inspectors." The country biller was required to list the starting and ending pass numbers and the number of passes that were returned.

An inspector traveling just ahead of the show rode all of the routes and veri-

fied that all of the paper on each billing report had been hung or posted. If an empty had been pulled by the owner prior to the show's arrival the passes given to that person were not honored on show day. If a daub had been covered by another show and were not "live" on show day his passes were also not honored. Although all of this record keeping seems very cumbersome it worked well. On days when the crowds were extremely large no attention was placed on the inspector's list. A tax and service charge of fifty cents was collected on each pass. Most of this charge was service and it added to the gross for the day.

In the majority of large cities both the street lithographers and the country



U. S. Litho produced this poster for Cole in 1946. It was originally designed by Strobridge and was used on Barnum & Bailey and on Ringling-Barnum in 1923 as shown here. Pfening Archives.

billers seldom encountered trouble in disposing of their daily paper allotment. Lithographers could usually anticipate several large clean windowed,



This original Hubert Castle bill was cross lined for Billy Powell in 1946. Pfening Archives.

empty stores along their routes that in many instances would assist that lithographer in disposing of a goodly amount of his paper and dates. The same applied to the country billposters who would also encounter numerous good sized daubs. This too assured the billposters of "shooting their hod." Country trucks carried two billposters and one lithographer who would do the window work in the outlaying areas while the billposters covered daubs.

Most country route billposters who worked the railroad route that the show would travel always saw to it that the railroad route was always well covered with paper so they could be seen by the show management when the show trains passed through their country route towns enroute to that particular show stand. Such stands of paper were known as "manager's daubs."

On smaller shows empties and farmers' outlying barns were sometimes "strong-armed." In other words paper was posted without the permission of the owner. Some lithographers carried a ring of skeleton keys that would allow them to enter empty buildings unbeknown to the owner. Sometimes they would get away with the action, but on other occasions the show's legal adjuster had to make a "fix" to settle the beef with the owner. This type of conduct was not tolerated on Cole.

During the 1946 season the Cole

Bros. advance car carried a crew of twenty-two billposters and lithographers, one paste maker, the car manager and the contracting press agent. The boss billposter was Ham DeLoel. The billposters were Harry Price, George Caron, Ci Sowash, Hank Mathews, William Kennedy and Charles Thornton. Jack S. Smith was boss lithographer with Jack Marcus, Phillip Marcus, Larry Wilcox, J. D. Harrison, Harry Gordon, William Dean, Walter Olsen, Frank Counsel, Harry Mong, Robert Todd and L. C. Langhard in his crew. James Clark was the pastemaker and C. S. Primrose was the contracting press agent. It was Primrose's job to layout and contract the newspaper advertising. The general press staff [story men] came in three or four days ahead of the show. The press agents remained in the show stand on show date to garner as much publicity as possible during the engagement.

The No. 2 advance car [non-rail car] was made up of approximately ten combination billers and banner tackers and was under the command of James Haddon.

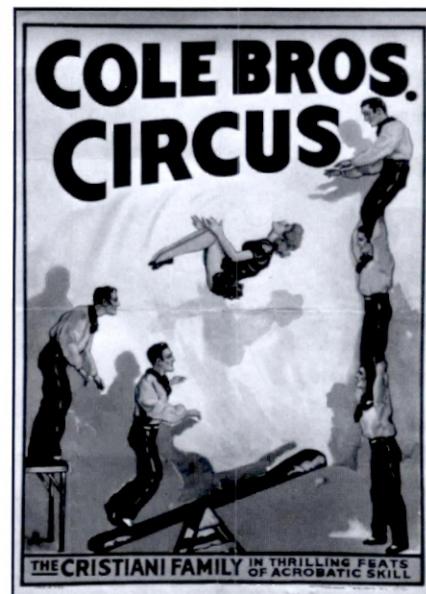
A cloth banner tacking crew under the direction of veteran Earl DeGlopper, with eight men, also traveled on the No. 1 car. These crafty workers used a truck to carry the ladders used to hang from buildings while tacking. They were referred to as "tack spitters" since they carried a supply of tacks in the mouths while working from a ladder.

As a rule the No. 1 car billed six show stands per week while the No. 2 car generally billed the Sunday dates, thereby keeping both cars on schedule.

The show also maintained an opposition brigade of around eight men traveling in advance. Whenever opposition prevailed this unit was sent in to counter the billing of other circuses that were contracted to play the same town within a month of the Cole show dates.

The Ringling-Barnum No. 1 advance car carried car manager Frank Mahery, a boss billposter, boss lithographer, and eighteen billers and lithographers. The Ringling-Barnum No. 2 car carried the manager, the two bosses and eight billers and lithographers. Their No. 3 car, or opposition brigade, had a manager, a banner squarer, a boss bannerman and five additional men.

The Dailey Bros. car carried manager William L. Oliver, and ten men. Their opposition



U. S. Litho produced this poster of the Cristiani titterboard act for the 1946 season. Pfening Archives.

brigade consisted of three men. The Clyde Beatty car was under the management of John Brassill and carried six billposters and eight lithographers. These were the four railroad circuses that toured in 1946. The Dailey and Beatty advance cars traveled by truck.

Cole Bros. Circus was scheduled to open a four day stand in Louisville on the winterquarters grounds April 18 to 21. The advertising car was shunted from quarters downtown to the Louisville and Nashville railroad depot on March 30. Louisville was billed on March 31 and April 1, 2 and 3. The car was sent to Owensboro on April 4 to bill the first road stand.

During the early part of the 1946 season the Cole show ran into opposition

These wait banners were tacked ahead of the Cole show's 1946 appearance in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Pfening Archives.



# COLE BROS. CIRCUS

PRESENTS



## The FAMOUS CRISTIANI FAMILY OF BAREBACK RIDING MARVELS

U. S. Litho produced this poster for the Cristiani Family in 1946, their first season with Cole. Pfening Archives.

with a number of other shows. Cole was contracted to play Parkersburg, West Virginia on May 7. Two truck shows were also to play that city. Bailey Bros. was scheduled two weeks ahead and Sparks Circus was set for May 7. This date kept the opposition brigade busy, but it turned out for naught as the date was later cancelled on short notice due to a coal strike. A similar situation occurred in Canton, Ohio, contracted for May 27. Ringling-Barnum was set to come in on July 4 and posted wait paper weeks in advance of the Cole date. This stand was also later cancelled with the show being rerouted into Kansas City, Missouri on May 27.

The Cole show ran into Ringling-Barnum opposition later in the season. Cole played Battle Creek, Michigan on June 24 with Ringling contracted for July 17; Cole was in Grand Rapids on June 27 with Ringling coming in on July 30. In Flint Cole was set for June 28 and Ringling played that city on July 30. Cole was in Kalamazoo on June 25 and Ringling showed that city on July 31.

Both shows played Wichita, Kansas, Cedar Rapids and Marshalltown, Iowa, however opposition was less heated in these cities as the dates were further apart.

The seventeen billers on the No. 1 Cole advance car each distributed 1,700 billing general admission passes on a daily basis. The cloth banner crew usu-

ally issued from 100 to 200 reserved seat passes for their tacking locations, making a daily total for the car of approximately 2,100 passes daily. Paper usage by the billers on the No. 1 car often totaled 3,000 sheets of lithographs, posting paper, cloth banners and window cards. Distribution of the window cards was the last form of billing to be used after the town had been completely lithographed.

Distribution of paper used and passes issued by the No. 2 car and the brigades usage is unknown since the writer was on board the No. 1 car, however, it is estimated that the total number of general admission and reserved seat passes in any given town was about 3,000 daily. It is not known how many passes were collected by the show while at the stand.

It could be said that after the No. 1 car departed for the next scheduled town the stand and the surrounding areas had been well billed and the natives knew that Cole Bros. Circus was scheduled to show their city on a given date. The writer knows of no outstanding events that happened on the car during that season.

The Cole show was routed during the early part of the season over the familiar territory coming out of its Louisville, Kentucky winterquarters, which took the show into Indiana, Illinois and Ohio during the early spring route where the Cole show ran into Ringling-Barnum "wait" paper and banners.

The most serious events affecting the Cole show in 1946 were the coal and rail strikes. These strikes, especially the coal situation, forced the show to make every effort to travel over dieselized rail lines. The strikes caused the show to lose a number of days of its scheduled route.

By mid May the coal miners nationwide strike had been in progress for five weeks. The Office of Defense Trans-

portation in early May ordered cuts in rail passenger service by twenty five percent. The Cole show was in Cincinnati, Ohio on May 12 and was scheduled to move to Lexington, Kentucky the next day. The move was made to Lexington, but did not receive permission from the ODT to make the next move to Ashland, Kentucky.

The show sat in Lexington for three days. Dates in Ashland and Arlington, Kentucky; Huntington and Parkersburg, West Virginia; Zanesville, Canton and



This 1945 photo taken in Joplin, Missouri illustrates the use of an empty store room. In this case also it contained posters for Russell Bros. Pan Pacific Circus and West Wonder Shows carnival. Pfening Archives.

Columbus, Ohio were cancelled. The show finally moved by diesel engine on the Southern Railway to New Albany, Indiana, which was scheduled at the last minute. The show played New Albany on May 18 and 19.

The brigade had been sent in and billed the town three days ahead. Radio and newspapers were used heavily since it was impossible to get full billing up on such notice. The original route was

This U. S. Litho poster was originally designed for Dorothy Herbert and was cross lined for Ruth Nelson in 1946. Pfening Archives.





dropped and Manager Zack Terrell ordered his agent to get out of the coal regions and move quickly. Staying on the Southern the show moved to Princeton, Indiana on May 20 and to Bellville, Illinois on the 21st. By May 23 the show was in Hannibal, Missouri. While in Hannibal the nationwide rail strike hit the show. The strike lasted only two days but the show was stranded on a siding in Hannibal for 48 hours.

These strikes caused two delays for the Cole show in ten days. General agent P. N. Branson, and the billing crews were in a state of turmoil. It was impossible for the advance car to cover the new route properly. The rail strike cost the Cole show scheduled dates in Moberly, Missouri on May 24 and the next day at Sedalis. When the trains again started moving the show moved to Kansas City, Missouri on Sunday May 26 where it was billed to appear on May 27, 28 and 29. The show had finally caught up with its paper.

Cancellation of towns under contract caused the show to wildcat in an effort to get on trains that used diesel locomotives. These quick moves were a challenge to the new general agent Pearl Newton Branson. Veteran general agent Jacob D. Newman had suffered a heart attack on March 16, 1946 in St. Paul, Minnesota while handling the Cole equipment and acts being used at the Shrine Circus. It was clear that he would not be able to fulfill his job as general agent of the Cole show.

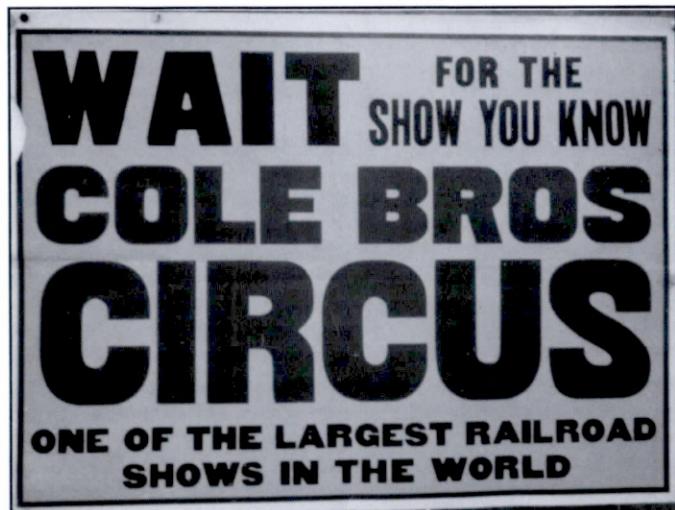
Zack Terrell appointed Branson general agent on April 23, 1946. Branson had served as a Cole Bros. contracting

This large daub featuring a nine sheet of Otto Greibling was posted for the ten day stand in Los Angeles, California in 1946. Circus World Museum collection.

agent in 1942, 1944 and 1945. A. J. Clark was moved from story man in the press department to the contracting job. Newman was 76 years of age at the time and had been general agent for a number of years. He died on April 23, 1946. Branson continued as general agent in 1947, however he died on August 21, 1947 and was replaced by William Lester.

I do not remember where the No. 1 advance car was located during the coal and rail strikes, however it was the duty of the car manager to order the car attached to a regular passenger train at each stand to be moved to the next

This half sheet "wait" lithograph was used by Cole Bros. Circus during the 1946 season. Pfening Archives.



town. Such moves usually took place after the crew had returned to the car after completing the day's work, usually late at night. The strikes encountered messed up two show routes of Branson's and took a hefty wallop on the show bankroll.

By early July the show was routed westward and was in Denver, Colorado on July 22, 23 and 24. Business as a whole improved greatly from Denver westward. After several dates in Colorado the show went into Wyoming, Utah and Idaho, Oregon and Washington. Seattle was shown on August 25 and 26. On August 31 to September 3 the show was in Portland, Oregon.

The initial California stand came at Redding on September 7. The advance car and the show moved down through California generally following the route it had played in 1940, 1942, 1943 and 1944.

The show was contracted to play Los Angeles from September 27 to October 6. Following the billing of towns prior to Los Angeles, the advance car moved into the Pacific Fruit yards in Los Angeles along with the No. 2 car, the banner brigade and the opposition brigade. The car remained parked for sixteen days and billed North Hollywood, Los Angeles, Long Beach, Santa Ana, Pasadena, Pomona and San Bernardino. The majority of these towns could be reached by truck or by street car. The car then made a 350 mile jump to Phoenix, Arizona.

During the time the show was on the west coast all date paper was shipped from a printing house in Los Angeles. The L. A. printing company continued to supply dates until the car left the state of Texas.

The twenty Texas stands closed at Nacogoches on November 9. The show encountered opposition from the Beatty show which closed its season in Nacogoches on October 30.

The show made a 228 mile jump to Shreveport, Louisiana on November 11. Texarkana, and Hot Springs, Arkansas were shown on November 12 and 13. The show closed the season in Little Rock on November 14. The Cole Bros. Circus then made a 529 mile run back to the Louisville winter quarters by way of Memphis and Nashville.

The home run for the advance car was made in good time being attached to regular passenger train service. The car arrived on the L & N and was later switched to the quarters.

# The Aerial Lafayettes

BY STEVE GOSSARD

The young Irish-Catholic brother and sister double trapeze act, the Aerial Lafayettes, was all but unknown before they suddenly appeared on the scene with the great Ringling Bros. Circus in 1912. In five years the young stars would vanish, victims, it would seem, of their own success.

James B. McGinty was born August 23, 1891 to Patrick and Ellen McGinty. He and his young sisters, Isabel and Agnes, were living with their widowed mother in the early 1900s at 1601 West Locust Street in Bloomington, Illinois.<sup>1</sup> An article in the *Daily Bulletin* of October 20, 1909 stated, with obvious pride, that Bert (James) McGinty had been working as a messenger boy for that newspaper from the age of 12 to the age of 14, when he began "holding amateur shows in a barn, with ten pins as the price of admission . . . and he became known to all the boys as the 'best ever' on the trapeze." Evidently Bert had developed his ability independently, probably watching the local professionals at practice and mimicing their work. He became "quite proficient on the trapeze and horizontal bars."

In the spring of 1908 the Cosmopolitan Carnival Company was showing on Front Street in Bloomington, when one of their "high aerial trapeze" performers took a bad fall, which "put him out of the business for the season and probably for keeps." The management wanted a substitute for this free feature attraction. "Young McGinty, who had watched the work of the dare-devil announced to the carnival management that he could take his place and do just as well." McGinty auditioned that afternoon and the astonished show bosses had a contract ready for his signature before he reached the ground. Perhaps such an occurrence can partially be attributed to Bert's being in the right

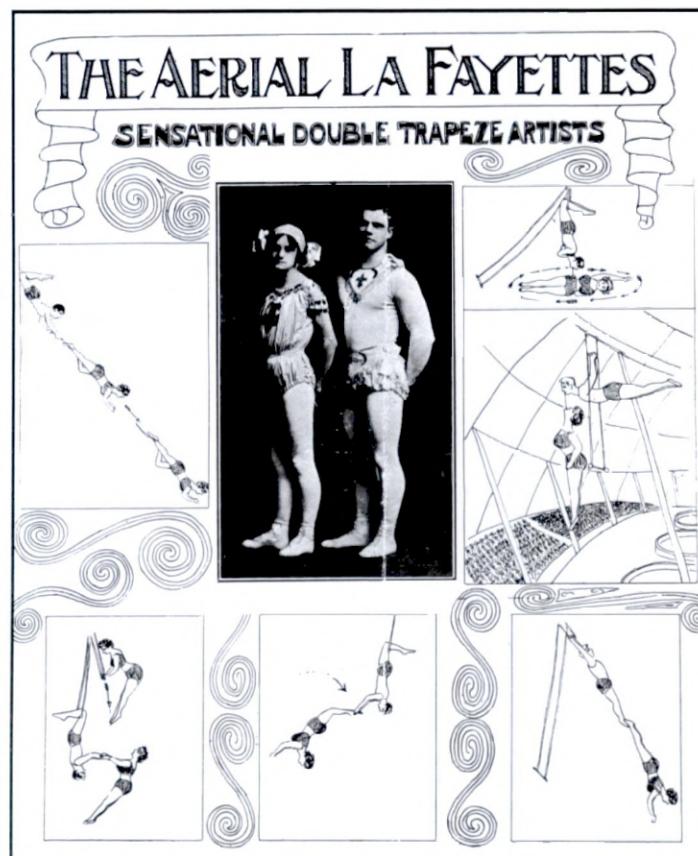
place at the right time, but the majority of credit must go to the incredible natural ability of this 16 year old lad.

During this season the Cosmopolitan carnival was visited by talent scouts with the Gollmar Bros. Circus, who saw Bert's act and immediately signed him up for the following season. He was listed in the Bloomington-Normal directory as "acrobat" having attained

some "hair-raising stunts of their own invention which not only was the talk of the circus crowds, but drew the enthusiastic good-will of the circus management." It was said that "they were featured on all of the big billboards of the show." Though they were offered "a handsome increase of salary" by Gollmar Bros. for the 1910 season, Bert and Jack split up at the close of the 1909 season. Perhaps a conflict of some sort caused them to break up such a highly successful partnership. "John Ernst," the *Bulletin* said, "will go into vaudeville this winter, with the expectation of remaining in that class of work next summer." Jack did not remain in vaudeville in 1910; however, but instead performed with the Dode Fisk show where he met and married Ora Loretta, of the sensational "Loretta Twins" aerial bar act. McGinty, it was said, "will put in the winter . . . working out new acts and looking for up a suitable partner." At this early stage in his career Bert had big ambitions. "He may decide to organize a whole new troupe of six or eight, with himself at the head and bid for the big(g)est circus work in the country."

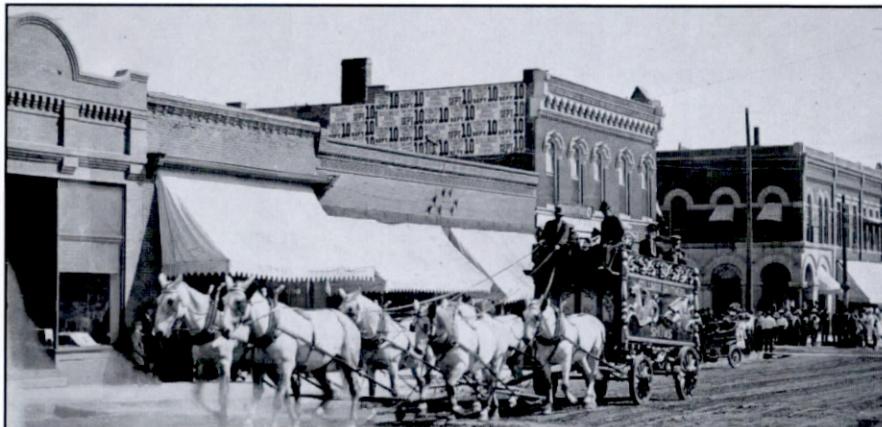
At this time Bert began breaking in another young Bloomington boy named Art Anderson on the single trapeze. Though McGinty never worked with Anderson as his partner in the double trapeze act, they apparently remained the best of friends for years to come, and at some point they did work together along with Grover McCabe in a three person comedy act. Anderson took the stage name of Art Monette and pursued an astonishing career as an extremely versatile artist on many shows.<sup>2</sup>

During the winter of 1909-1910 McGinty must have worked the vaudeville circuit with Edward C. Lamke. A photograph on file at the Bloomington Public Library pictures McGinty and Lamke together in costume. They



This group of illustrations depicts a number of the feats that were part of the double trapeze routine performed by Bert and Agnes McGinty, the Aerial Lafayettes. Author's collection.

professional status at the age of seventeen entirely of his own initiative by virtue of his natural abilities. Bert teamed up with another Bloomington boy, Jack Ernst, the two calling themselves the "Ernstonians." They performed with Gollmar Bros. in 1909 doing a trapeze "leaping aerial act" with



must certainly have been calling themselves the Lafayettes at this time, and in later years it would become a matter of contention between the two former partners as to who should have the right to use the name "Lafayettes." With their photograph in *Billboard* magazine advertising the Ringling Bros. show on April 20, 1912, Bert's double trapeze act was advertised as "the ORIGINAL Aerial Lafayettes, and NOT the Flying Lafayettes."

Alas, the distinction of being the "original Lafayettes," did not belong to McGinty, for an earlier "Lafayette" team had worked as early as 1907 with Col. Uden's Wild West show, which had its winter quarters in Flanagan, Illinois. This act worked with the Empire Indoor Circus during the winter of 1908-1909, and with the Great Lugar Shows during the tent season of 1909.<sup>3</sup> This, no doubt, was Ed Lamke and his wife, Ethel, the same "two Lafayettes, wire walkers" which were advertising their vaudeville routine in 1912 as "The Wire Walking Comedians." They did three acts: "No. 1-My Cousin Sal is a Circus Gal. No. 2-Mistaken for the Cook. No. 3-Simple Simpler." Requesting work for fair units, they stated "suit-case managers and hot-air promoters keep off. I have been there." As with most "independent" acts working the vaudeville circuit, the trail of the Lamkes is somewhat obscure. Lamke was listed as a painter in the Bloomington-Normal directory in 1913 and as "actor" in 1915 (a blanket term often applied to anyone in the entertainment field) residing in Bloomington. The birth of a son to Mr. and Mrs. Ed Lafayette was recorded in a *Billboard* magazine in 1912 and that of a daughter in 1918.<sup>4</sup> A photograph published in the *Daily Pantagraph* June 25, 1933 depicted the "Lamke Troupe of 1907-11," a troupe of four performers Leo Hendryx (in clown costume), Ed Lamke, Ethel Lamke, and Cloyde L. Malan. By 1933 Ethel and Leo Hendryx were both deceased.

Bert McGinty was with the Gollmar Bros. Circus when it paraded in Sac City, Wisconsin on September 10, 1909.

Ed Lamke, it was said, was living in Kansas City. Cloyde Malan was working as a meat cutter living in Bloomington.

In 1910 Bert McGinty broke his sister Agnes in on a new double trapeze routine. It is uncertain whether or not the McGintys' act was ready to work the tent season with the circus that year, but one or the other of the Lafayette troupes was listed on the roster of the Campbell Bros. Circus as "aerialists" that year.<sup>5</sup> It is possible that Bert had been practicing with Agnes prior to 1910 and that they were ready to work with Campbell Bros. that year. That winter, according to the *Billboard* of February 18, Bert and Agnes worked "with the Polly of the Circus Company."

In October of 1910 Bert signed a contract for the 1911 season with the Great Adam Forepaugh and Sells Bros. Big United Shows to provide a "Double trapeze act, one lady and one Gent. Roman standing races, Gent. Both go in tournament, entry, parade, hold objects and ect. (sic)" for \$35 per week. They appeared with their double trapeze act in display 14 of the program.<sup>6</sup> Somewhere along the way Bert had developed a talent for horsemanship which he put to use over the following years. On August 17 Bert "submitted to an appendicitis operation, thus losing the balance of the season" with the Forepaugh show. Although a *Daily Bulletin* article dated March 22, 1912 stated that the Lafayettes had just finished a seven week indoor engagement at the Hippodrome in St. Louis, Bert and Agnes had actually been working that winter in the ring barn in Petersburg, Illinois. There Agnes had suffered slight injuries in early February. *Billboard* magazine reported, "one of the Original Lafay-

ettes, while swinging by her teeth, fell about eighteen feet when the strap gave way."<sup>7</sup>

Though *Billboard* magazine reported twice in 1912 that the Aerial Lafayettes double trapeze act was working with Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus, Bert and Agnes actually opened with Ringling Bros. on April 1 and toured with the show the entire season in display 15 along with six other double trapeze acts, which included the Flying Wards, who were featured in the center ring, and the Kimball Sisters. This season was the end of the Wards' association with the Ringling show and the beginning of their fabulous flying return act, for with this show Eddie married Mayme Kimball (Harvey) and Jenny Ward married Alec Todd, of the Flying Herberts. Together they formed the famous Flying Wards flying return act. The Wards' sensational double trapeze act had been a feature of the Ringling show for six years. Whether by chance or by design, the Lafayettes joined the "Big Show" the same year that the Wards were leaving. Bert was also listed in *Billboard* as participating in the big clown number in display 10.<sup>8</sup> Considering the fact that this was only Bert's fifth year performing professionally, only their second year performing as a team, the Lafayettes' rapid rise to the top of the profession had been amazing.

The Lafayette act on Hagenbeck-

This photo of Agnes and Bert McGinty appeared in the October 21, 1911 *Billboard*, after they completed that season on the Forepaugh-Sells Circus.





The original Aerial Lafayettes in 1912 the year they were first with the Ringling show. Author's collection.

Wallace in 1912 may have been Ed Lamke's troupe. Advertising for other Lafayette troupes may have prompted the ad which in *Billboard* for Ringling Bros., in which Bert claimed his act to be the "original" Lafayettes.

In August of 1912 Ringling Bros. signed the Aerial Lafayettes for the 1913 season doing "Double trapeze, 1 lady, 1 gent. Ride roman standing races, Bert Lafayette. Both go in spectacle, tournament, entry, parade, hold objects, etc." at a salary of \$55 per week beginning April 1. When Ringling Bros. played Bloomington on July 16, 1913 the *Pantagraph* stated: "The Flying Lafayettes appeared here yesterday, and their act was one of the most sensational presented during the entire performance. . . . They stage a double trapeze act similar to that presented by the Flying Wards. The Wards formerly had the contract with the Ringling show, but owing to the fact that they also had a contract with Marioneilla . . .

they were forced to go with the foreign agent this year. The Lafayettes then took the contract."

The Ringling Bros. advertisement in the *Billboard* of April 19 is consistent with the assumption that the Lafayettes had taken the Wards' place on the program as "a successful Feature as a Center Ring Attraction." They appeared in display 13 along with eight other dou-

ble and single trapeze acts, includ-ed the Aerial Macks, a team which will be heard from later. Bert again worked along with the clowns and also in the fifth event of the "Grand wild west hippodrome races" in display 16 driving a team of two horses. At this time the McGintys had moved to 908 N. Morris Avenue in Bloomington.

The Lafayettes may have presented a stage act for vaudeville in 1914, or they may have worked parks and fairs or toured outside of the United States. As yet this writer has found no record of the Lafayettes working with any circus in this country in 1914. A reply to a letter of application from Charles Ringling to Bert McGinty for the 1915 season, on file in the Milner Library Special Collections at Illinois State University, may explain why the Lafayettes did not travel with the Ringling Circus in 1914: "We enclose herewith contracts. Please sign and return copy to us at once.

"You will remember when you closed with the show a fine had been assessed again (sic) you which you did not feel like standing. You will be a couple of years older next spring than you were when you left the show. I am well satisfied that knowing the rules of the show you will get along here now, and when you come on you ought to feel that way about it and forget all about the fine together with what brought it about. These suggestions are made, and I feel certain that you will understand, in the friendliest way in the world."

This was the second letter in one month from Ringling to McGinty. The first letter was declining an earlier application for work. Ringling stated: "We would like to place your act but you are asking altogether too much salary. . . . I want to offer you all we can see our way clear to pay you, \$75.00 per week. Let me know what you think about it."

It is apparent that the management had taken exception to something that Bert had done in violation of the rules during the 1913 season, which may foreshadow future events.

It is certain that the Lafayettes were playing the theater circuit late in 1914, since Bert's first letter of application on September 30 was addressed from Nashville, Tennessee with a return address of "Majestic Theater, Chattanooga, Tenn. Or perm. addr. Bloomington, Ill."

Once again there were two listings for Aerial Lafayettes acts working for

different circuses in 1915, both listed in the April 25 issue of *Billboard*. For the Sells-Floto Circus opening in San Bernadino, California a "LaFayettes" double trapeze act appeared in display 10 along with eight other acts. For the Ringling show opening in Chicago "The LaFayettes, aerialists," appeared in display 6 along with five other aerial acts including the Aerial Macks and the sensational Lillian Leitzel. This was Leitzel's first year with the Ringling Bros. Circus.<sup>9</sup> The McGintys were certainly the Aerial Lafayettes act with the Ringling show that year. Their contract called for "First-class Double Trapeze act by Bert LaFayette and sister. Both go in spectacle, tournament, entry, parade, hold objects, etc." They were described in the Ringling program that year as "Dexterous and daring feats performed in mid-air by two of the youngest and most accomplished aerialists. A 'Made in America' act of which America should feel proud." Bert had, of course, agreed to the \$75 per week salary.<sup>10</sup>

In March of 1916 Bert and Agnes played three weeks at the Majestic Theater in Springfield, Illinois for a winter circus along with Leo Hendryx of Bloomington. They opened with Ringling Bros. at the Coliseum in Chicago March 29. Their contract with Ringling Bros. had been renewed the previous October with an increase in salary to \$85 per week.

The Flying Lafayettes, Edward and Ethel Lamke. Illinois State University Special Collections.



They appeared in display 7 of the opening performance along with five other single and double acts. Where the year before the Ringling program had boasted that the Lafayettes were a "Made in America" act of which America should feel proud" the program now described them as the "First appearance of a European novelty." In May *Billboard* stated that the Lafayettes were also appearing in display 15 doing an iron jaw routine. The Aerial Macks were not listed in the aerial number this year and the author would speculate (for reasons that will be apparent later) that the lady performer with the Aerial Macks may have been unable to work.<sup>11</sup>

An interesting aspect of historical research is the fact that sometimes accounts conflict with one another even when they were recorded at the time in which they occurred. The author encountered such a conflict in researching the Aerial Lafayettes, which constituted a mystery for many months. This mystery bears repeating because it makes an interesting story in itself.

I was unable to find any trace of the Aerial Lafayettes after 1916. The McGinty double trapeze team never worked with the Ringling Bros. or any other major circus again. Finally, I found an article from the *Daily Bulletin* dated December 10, 1923. This article told of the activities of the professional circus performers that year and gave a brief note of the career of the Aerial Lafayettes: "Among the early aerialists of the city were Bert McGinty and his sister, two of the greatest trapeze performers of their time. They were veritable dare devils, working with no net below them. Several years ago Bert gave a performance here when he was not fit because of appendicitis but got through all right. A few days later he died at a local hospital."

The most curious feature of this account was the fact that Bert had already had an appendicitis operation in 1911 while with the Forepaugh-Sells show. Assuming that his death must have occurred between 1916 and 1923, I began searching references for circuses which had played in Bloomington during that period, but found no clue as to when the Lafayettes had played Bloomington. Also, the Y.M.C.A had not presented its annual circus in Bloomington during that period. I could find no account of Bert's death in the McLean County records. The reason was because Bert had not performed in Bloomington during that period and he had not died there.

Further information was provided by Fred D. Pfening III in the form of two letters from October of 1916 in the Pfening Archives. The first letter was from Bert to Charles Ringling addressed from 221 Institute Place, Chicago, Illinois: "Am writing to see if there will be a possiblity of placing another act on your show the coming season. I guess it is is (sic) doubtful but I would write and ask you. Awaiting to hear from you."

Considering the previous success and popularity of the Aerial Lafayettes on the Ringling show the doubtful tone of this letter would be difficult to explain if we did not have Charles' reply as well, which read: "Am sorry that it will

The Lafayettes' contract called for them to appear in the 1913 Ringling Bros. parades.



The Aerial Lafayettes in 1913, their second season on Ringling Bros. World's Greatest Shows. Author's collection.

be impossible for us to offer you an engagement for 1917. I believe we have been somewhat patient with you and that we have tried to make it possible to keep you with the Ringling show. Personally I had hoped that you would consult your best interests and in a manly manner to do that which was best for your health and welfare. If you see it the way I do you will feel that you have made some serious errors and if you see it further as I do this must not discourage you as you will profit by the experience of the past and take hold and so what you ought to now in a manly way. I certainly hope you do this."

As I read this passage I couldn't help but wonder how many such letters Charles Ringling had to write through the years. I didn't envy him this aspect of his work.

What "serious errors" could this letter refer to which could actually affect a person's health? Clause number 8 of the Ringling Bros. standard contract form drew specific guidelines concerning a performer's behavior while with the show: ". . . the ARTIST further recognizes that gambling, drunkenness, the use of profane, vulgar and abusive language, immoral, offensive and unlawful conduct are at all times and places ab-



solutely prohibited . . . which may in the EMPLOYERS' judgement be deemed proper and necessary for the good government and conduct of their institution and members thereof."

The circumstances of Bert's death continued to elude me until I enlisted the help of John Daniel Draper at the Circus World Museum in Baraboo. He sent me a list of references from the museum files which included Bert's obituary as printed in the May 12, 1917 issue of the *Billboard*: "Chicago, May 5th-James McGinty, 27, known professionally as Bert Lafayette, of the Aerial Lafayettes, died at the Oak Forest Hospital, Chicago, last Sunday. He had been unable to fill his engagements with his sister, Agnes, who is now one of the Aerial Macks, with Ringling Bros. Circus, but this illness was not thought to be of a very serious nature. April 26 his condition became worse, and he was removed to the hospital. With his body, which was buried in Bloomington, Ill., his home, were interred the remains of a sister, a nonprofessional, who died in Bloomington, April 28 at the age of 23. The entire roster of Ringling Bros. Circus extended their condolences and substantial support to Agnes Lafayette."

Another note in the same issue read: "Bert Lafayette (James Burtrum McGinty), aged 27, one of the Aerial Lafayettes, died at Oak Forest Hospital, Chicago, Ill., April 29. Although he had been unable to fill his engagements for some time past, his illness was not thought to be serious and his death was in the nature of a shock to his many friends."

The 1923 *Daily Bulletin* article had obviously been erroneous and possibly intentionally misleading. Furthermore, the *Billboard* articles statements that Bert had been "unable to fill his engagements" were obviously taking liberties with the truth as well. A search of the microfilms at the Bloomington Public Library yielded the following torn and fragmented article from the *Daily Pantagraph* of April 30, 1917: "Brother and Sister United in Death-McGinty and Mrs. J. R. Murray. . . . by News of His Sister's . . . -aking Off To Be Double Funeral.

"Deepest grief over the news of the [death] of a loved sister is believed to [have] been the underlying cause for [the] sudden death of James B. [McGinty] formerly of this city, who ex[pired] yesterday morning at 10:20 . . . in Chicago. The former Bloomingtonian



A more mature looking Bert McGinty is pictured here with his sister Agnes around 1913. Art Monette scrapbook in Illinois State University Archives.

was for six years [con]nected with Ringling Brothers [Circus], and with his sister formed the [com]pany known as the Aerial La[fay]ettes whose thrilling feats were . . . ational knowledge. For the past . . . he had not been affiliated with [the] Ringlings, his sister, Miss Agnes [Mc]Ginty, who had worked in the aerial [act] with him, having been married [in] Chicago last September. For the [past] six or eight months he had not [been] in the best of health, but it [was] not believed that his condition [was] very serious. He was able only [this] week to go to Chicago from here.

"Im]mediate relatives are of the [opin]ion that the shock of hearing of [the] death of another sister, Mrs. J. [P.] Murray, of this city, who passed [away] early Saturday morning, was [partly] responsible for his passing. [The] news of the passing of the [bro]ther and sister, separated in [death] by only a few hours, is espe[cially] tragic, and the hundreds of friends and acquaintances of the [fam]ily here will unite in deep sympathy.

"James McGinty was born in this [city] August 23, 1891 and had made [this] city his home the greater part [of] his life, except the period [while] with the Ringling circus. Of a . . . and

conscientious character, [he] was possessed of those traits of . . . that are much admired. He [was a] member of the Elks lodge of [this] city and a faithful parishioner [of St.] Patrick's church.

" . . . was made in the Saturday [morn]ing issue of the [death] of his sister, Mrs. J. P. Mur[ray] early that morning, but the ne[ws] was received just before the paper went to press. Isabel McGinty was [born] in Bloomington September 7, [1893] and was united in marriage [to J. P.] Murray January 4, 1915. The . . . is a machinist employed at the [C. and] A. shops. She was a devout [mem]ber of St. Patrick's church here, . . . children were born to this union. . . . of the deaths of the sister [and] brother just a few hours apart . . . services will be held at the [same] time today from St. Patrick's [church] and the two will be buried . . . The announcement of the [double] funeral will be found else [where] in this issue."

Agnes was probably substituting for the lady in the Aerial Macks' act, as mentioned in the *Billboard* article, in display 6 along with four other acts. She may have worked with this act for the entire season, but the Aerial Macks were not listed with the opening of the Ringling Bros. Circus for the 1918 season and it is doubtful that she worked past the 1917 season. Irene Scott, of Bloomington, recalls Agnes visiting her mother in the 1930s. To the best of her recollection "Aunt Agie" never mentioned working with the Aerial Macks and she is certain that Agnes was never married. She recalls Agnes as being a tea-toteler, and once when Irene's mother had tried to make Agnes take a shot of whisky for medicinal reasons Agnes waited until she had turned her back to dump it into the fish bowl.<sup>12</sup>

In fairness, it is best not to speculate as to what Bert had done to cause his health to deteriorate to the point of his death. He had been an early sensation with great ambitions in 1910. When thrown in among the greatest professionals in the world perhaps his self-confidence had begun to flag. Then again, where does one go when he has reached the pinnacle of his profession at age 22? Bert could have formed a flying return act as Jack, Ernst and Eddie Ward had done. But the pressure to remain on top in one line or another must have taken its toll. Perhaps the fear of failure led him, instead, to follow a course toward self-destruction. Perhaps, in his own mind, it was better to self-destruct than to fail in some new

endeavor. Probably the only assessment is to say that, after his rapid rise to the top of his profession Bert had simply "burned out."

#### FOOTNOTES

1. *Daily Pantagraph* April 30, 1917 p. 3.
2. Art Monette Scrapbook, Illinois State University Milner Library Special Collection.
3. *Billboard* December 14, 1907 p. 23; February 20, 1907 p. 19; March 16, 1907 p. 77; February 20, 1909 p. 19; May 29, 1909 p. 19.
4. *Billboard* March 12, 1912 p. 51; October 12, 1912 p. 17; March 9, 1918 p. 26.
5. *Billboard* April 23, 1910 pp. 21 & 32.
6. Contracts, Pfening Archives; *Billboard* April 1, 1911 p. 25; April 15, 1911 p. 28; May 6, 1911 p. 4.
7. *Billboard* January 13, 1912 p. 31; February 17, 1912 p. 23; March 2, 1912 p. 25.
8. *Billboard* April 13, 1912 pp. 6 & 63; April 20, 1912 p. 51; April 27, 1912 p. 6; May 11, 1912 p. 50; May 25, 1912 p. 36. *Daily Bulletin* March 22, 1912 p. 11; Ringling Bros. program 1912.
9. *Billboard* April 24, 1915, pp. 16 & 58.
10. Contract, Pfening Archives.
11. *Daily Bulletin* March 10, 1916 p. 7; Contract, Pfening Archives; *Billboard* April 22, 1916 p. 3; May 13, 1916 p. 67; Ringling Bros. programs 1915 & 1916.
12. *Billboard* April 14, 1917 p. 66; interview with Irene Scott July 16, 1987.

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## RAYMOND TOOLE STOTT - CIRCUS AND ALLIED ARTS: A BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Volume 5

Toole Stott died before he could publish this final volume. In it there are a further 2,500 entries, listing additions and updating the previous volumes. This volume does not only represent a revision, it also acts as an important supplement: many references were gathered by Toole Stott during a visit to Illinois State University-the foremost source of information on circus in the United States. There he was able to examine the libraries of three great circus collectors acquired and housed at the University. Many of the items cited are very rare and of great interest to scholars of the circus.

At the Congress in London in 1985 the Circus Commission, under the chairmanship of Antony Hippisley Coxe, resolved to persuade the American university to whom Toole Stott had bequeathed the typescript and copyright either to publish the work, or to relinquish the copyright. After a protracted correspondence the university agreed to relinquish the copyright in all 5 volumes to SIBMAS. The Executive Committee of SIBMAS has agreed to publish this final volume provided that subscriptions would guarantee costs. ??? subscriptions are required to ensure publication.

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## SHORT SKETCHES OF FORMER SHOWS

# Bud Hawkins Trained Animal Circus

SEASON OF 1936

**B**ud Hawkins Wild Animal Circus was another of several small motorized shows which went on the road for the first time in 1936. Others included Bockus & Kilonis, Eddie Kuhn, Bonham Bros., Maynard Bros., Sam Jones, Joe B. Webb, Martin Bros. and Reo Bros. It may be recalled that Reo Bros. was the initial show covered in the revival of this series. All of these circuses with the exception of a very few lasted only a short time during the season, although some did reappear in later years.

Bud Hawkins framed his show in the ten truck class at Murray, Kentucky in the early weeks of 1936. Two styles of letterheads were used with each bearing a different slogan. One read, "You Can't Go Wrong With A Show That Is Right," and the other, "A Bright Jewel in the Circus Diadem," plus also "Magnificent Spectacle of Super Excellence."

There was nothing in *Billboard* prior

Bud Hawkins with a trained monkey in Fox Lake, Wisconsin. June 26, 1936.

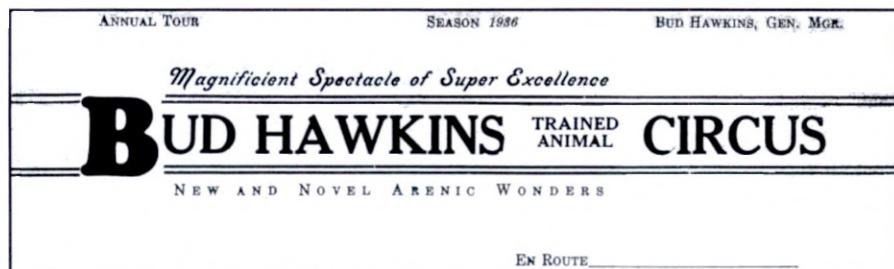


By Joseph T. Bradbury

to the opening of the Bud Hawkins show but in the Pfening Archives is a letter written by the owner to Albert Sigsbee of Milwaukee, Wisconsin who was being sought as the general agent.

tiles; James Chavanne, human volcano and Madam Avon, assisted by Prince Budda, mental act. Leona Lee, herself, was the annex attraction. The article concluded saying business of late had been good.

It is assumed the show finished April



Letterhead used by the Bud Hawkins Trained Animal Circus in 1936. Pfening Archives.

The letter, dated Murray, Kentucky, March 12, 1936, read as follows: "Have been looking for a letter from you for some time. Do you know as yet if you will be with the Riddle show this summer?

"I expect to open the last of April, let me hear from you. Let me know if you have a car, your lowest salary."

The services of Mr. Sigsbee were acquired but as we shall see in another letter from Hawkins later he expressed displeasure with his general agent's performance.

The new Bud Hawkins show opened in Murray, Kentucky on April 25. There was no opening review in the *Billboard* and first news from the show came a couple of weeks later when a short article stated that Leona Lee had joined the Hawkins circus in Bardswell, Kentucky (which was not far from Murray and quite possibly the next stand, at least before April 30) and was presenting seven side show acts. She was owner-manager of the show and had the following personnel: Sid Crane was on front, Jack and Homer Wallace, tickets, Mary Webb, fat girl; Cotton Jones, lecturer; Nellie White, sword box; Princess Louise, rep-

with dates in the same general area of Kentucky plus a few stands in Tennessee, as it was said later the show was in that state at one time during the season. On April 30 the Bud Hawkins Circus was in Cadiz, Kentucky. All through May we have only sketchy dates on the route. On May 8 it played Tompkinsville, Kentucky and was still in the state at Hodgenville the 13th, and Springfield the 14th. On the 20th it was in Flemingsburg and the following day in Carlisle. The route is complete for the final four days in May: Carrollton, Kentucky the 27th, then moving into Indiana at Vevay, 28th; Scottsburg, 29th and Salem on the 30th. Bud Hawkins followed the example of many of the smaller shows of that day by running just enough of the route so people responding to their *Billboard* ads could contact the show. Most of the time the dates were a part of the advertisement but sometimes they were printed in the regular route column.

The May 30, 1936 issue carried this ad: "Bud Hawkins Circus Wants. Pony drill with own transportation. Big show act doing two or more feature acts. Banner man. Man with own car to herald, good seat man, working men that can drive trucks. Will lease elephant with own transportation. Billposter. Cates wire." The route with several Kentucky and Indiana stands was given.

The show was in Indiana for the first half of June with the following stands

known: Mooresville, 3rd; Thorntown, 4th; Culver, 10th; Plymouth, 11th; Walkerton, 12th; and Chesterton, 13th. The Hawkins show was in Illinois at McHenry, 17th; Antioch, 18th; Libertyville, 19th and Genoa the 20th. A few days later we pick up the show in Wisconsin, playing Horicon, 24th; Campbellsport, 25th; Fox Lake, 26th and Markesan the 27th.

CFA members Bob Shepard and E. L. Williams of Chicago drove to Libertyville and witnessed the matinee performance. Their report, carried by both the *Billboard* and *White Tops*, stated the show traveled on thirty-one trucks and house cars. They said that Bud Hawkins was the owner-manager and presented a program that would honor a much larger show. Harry Haag, son of the late Ernest Haag, was equestrian director. [Author's note. Although most fans visiting shows would count only the regular circus owned trucks, some would count any and every vehicle on the show, personal house trailers, even automobiles, hence the total count of 31.]

Another article printed in *White Tops* said that prominent circus fans Mr. and Mrs. Sverre O. Braathen of Madison, Wisconsin drove to Dubuque, Iowa on June 20 and visited the Dan Rice Cir-

Ruby Haag and her trained dogs on the Hawkins show in 1936. Obert Miller's, animal trainer, is in the background. Bill Kasiska photo.



cus. On the way back home they noticed some chalk marks on the road (this was permissible in those days) and running them down found the Bud Hawkins Circus in Elkhorn, Wisconsin where it had a Sunday layover. The Braathens met Al Sigsbee, who introduced them to Mr. and Mrs. Hawkins, and Harry Haag.

This Donaldson Litho Co. stock design was used by the Bud Hawkins show. Jim Dunwoody collection.

Two months into the route the show evidently was still needing acts and other personnel. The following ad appeared in the June 30 *Billboard*: "Want. Big show act doing two or more. Prefer wire act or strong novelty. Good circus cook. Boss canvasman. Workingmen that drive trucks. Useful people write. Positively no boozers." An Illinois route was listed.

A week later this ad appeared: "Bud Hawkins Circus Wants. Pony drill, property men, useful people. Write Buzz Brown." Wisconsin dates were listed in this ad.

Even though the show continued to advertise quite often very little other information came in the *Billboard* pages. There was only a very short notice near the end of June which said that Fred and Marie Guthrie had joined the Bud Hawkins Circus.

While playing Fox Lake, Wisconsin on June 26 the Hawkins show was visited by Bill Kasiska. He took a number of photos and several days later sent prints to Hawkins. This gesture resulted

in the interesting letter from Hawkins which is mentioned later.

At long last the *Billboard* finally provided an informative article about the new Bud Hawkins Circus. The article appeared in the July 11 issue and was headlined, "Wisconsin Dates Good for Bud Hawkins show." The story was written by Russ Howe who caught the show in Horicon, Wisconsin on June 24th. He stated Bud Hawkins had one of the fastest moving little circuses on the road. The Wisconsin dates had been good, with matinees only fair but good crowds at night. A new 80 foot big top with two 40s were to soon be put into use. [Author's note. If the report about the new tent was correct then it can be assumed that in all probability the top it replaced would have been approximately of the same dimensions. Unfortunately so far no photos picturing the Hawkins big top have surfaced.]

The article stated that Bud Hawkins was the sole owner and Mrs. Hawkins was the show treasurer; S. W. Floyd was bandmaster with twelve pieces. James Beck was boss canvasman with twelve assistants. S. B. Floyd had the stands (concessions); Cliff Malcolm, novelties; M. Thurston, candy. Bill Keeno was in charge of reserved seats and George Silverlake was on the front door. The cookhouse was under the direction of Mrs. Hawkins.

The performance included Bud Hawkins, working animals; Fred Guthrie and his wife Marie, double traps; Fischer troupe of acrobats; Obert Miller's trained ponies, dogs and monkeys; Mlle Ruby (Haag), single traps and human fly and Dextero, bounding wire. Ray Duke was producing clown with eight joeys. Trained dog troupes were presented in three rings. Mme Dupree, swinging ladder; Mons. Frederich, single traps and balancing; Mlle Emeline,

S. W. Floyd's big show band on Bud Hawkins in 1936. The nicely lettered truck in background is presumably the band sleeper. Bill Kasiska photo.





Billstand of the Hawkins show in Fox Lake, Wisconsin, June 26, 1936. The town's name was hand painted on the large date sheet. Bill Kasiska photo.

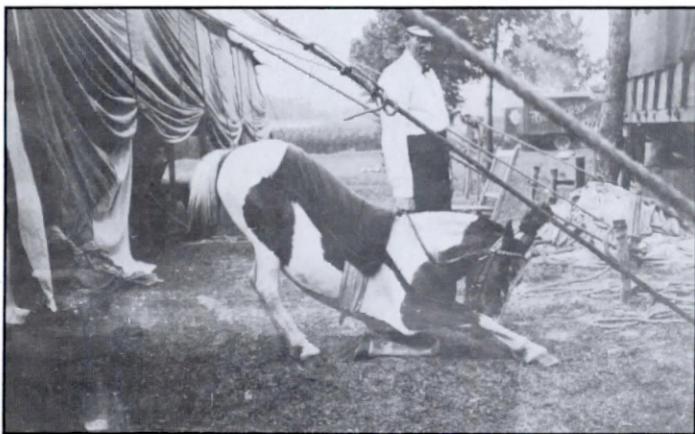
breakaway; Belotti brothers, horizontal bars; Jack Herbes, trampoline and Ray Duke and company in "Jargo."

The piece concluded by stating the show was moving on ten trucks and semi trailers. Scheduled to join on July 6 was Sid Crane and his Ten in One side show, using new semi-trailers and light plant. This would indicate that Leona Lee had left.

Following the Wisconsin tour the show moved back into Illinois and played Naperville on July 8th, Geneva the 9th, and Sycamore on the 10th. Sometime about here the show made a quick change in its route. Marengo, Illinois was originally scheduled for July 11th, but substituted for that town was Rochelle, Illinois, home of W. H. Hohenadel, then editor of the *White Tops*.

Hohenadel reported in the Circus Fans

Obert Miller with a trained pony on Bud Hawkins in 1936. Kasiska photo in Bradbury collection.



journal that he caught the show that day with the circus coming in with only two days notice and in face of opposition to another show's paper. Hohenadel said the temperature was 110 in the shade that day. No matinee was given on account of the extreme heat and at night there was a very light crowd. He also noted that three days later he caught Russell Bros. Circus at DeKalb, Illinois on July 14th.

The Bud Hawkins show as well as all other circuses in the general midwestern area of the country were caught in one of the worst heat waves of all times. All through this part of the nation as well as many other sections the torrid temperatures began in June and continued through mid-summer causing a drastic drop at the ticket wagons of all shows. The little outfits such as Bud Hawkins were hit worst but the heat adversely affected even the large railers, Al G. Barnes and Ringling-Barnum in particular. As we shall see later Bud Hawkins said he did little or no business for about twenty-five days when the heat wave was at its worst.

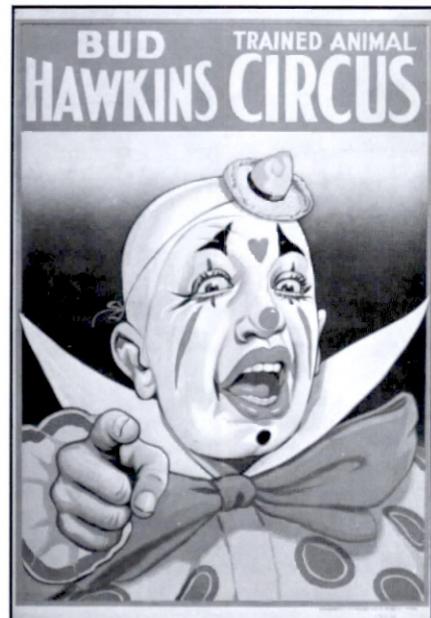
Other stands played in Illinois included Wilmington, July 13th; Dwight, 14th; Momence, 15th; Gilman, 16th; Hoopston, 17th and Rantoul the 18th. Another change in the route occurred on July 15th with the show playing Momence, Illinois. An earlier published route had the show in Washington, Indiana on that day.

The final known stands in Illinois came at Casey, 22nd; Robinson, 23rd and Bridgeport the 24th. The next published date had the show in Kentucky at Leitchfield on August 5th.

A storm struck the show on the lot at Leitchfield and the next stand was blown in order to repair the damage done to the big top and other

properties. The route resumed August 7th at Glasglow, Kentucky. We have no information on stands played during the next week but the show was at Campbellsville, Kentucky on August 13th, which was the final date of the season.

The August 29, 1936 *Billboard* told of the finish in an article headlined "Bud Hawkins show closes. Campbellsville, Kentucky August 13-final stand-storm damages tent at Leitchfield." The story reported that Roy Myers stated that the Bud Hawkins Circus closed at Campbellsville on the night of August 13th. The show had opened at Murray, Kentucky on April 25th, and had been in Kentucky, Tennessee, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin and back into Kentucky. Business was fair with the exception of four weeks during the extremely hot weather the later part of June and early part of July. The last



Another stock Donaldson lithograph used by the Bud Hawkins Circus in 1936. Circus World Museum collection.

three weeks in the Blue Grass state were good.

The article stated that two days were lost at Leitchfield when a storm damaged the tent at five o'clock on August 5th. The following day was spent in repairing it and it was ready for a night show August 7th at Glasglow, Kentucky where there was a fair house. At the night show at Campbellsville the tent was packed.

Evidently the equipment was stored at Campbellsville for a while after closing. Bud Hawkins wrote to Bill Kasiska from Campbellsville on August 29th. The original letter, now in the Pfening

Archives, is most informative and sums up the story of the show's ill fated tour that season.

The letter reads in part: "Your always welcome letter and photographs received. Many thanks for photos. Sorry I have been so long in answering. The days have been pretty strenuous, heat, poor business, changing people etc.

"We closed our show here August 14th. Mr. Sigsbee, our advance man that you met in Fox Lake, either maliciously or ignorantly routed us so badly that we could not survive. The Curtiss-Gregg Circus said he did the same to them. Well, so goes the wheel of fortune that Old Man Fate still ballys, 'Step Right Up Gentlemen and Try Your Luck.' Perhaps we can analyze this effort to a profit in our next.

"We had a visit from Walter L. Main yesterday. He was through here looking over territory for his show. Expects to play a few stands here going south, so he said. I hear they have a nice program. We hope to see it if they get close.

"Too bad Mr. Harvey and Mr. Webb of Russell Bros. have come to a parting. [Author's note. This would be R. M. Harvey, well known general agent and C. W. Webb owner of Russell Bros.] There has been some friction there for some time. This week's *Billboard* says Harvey is considering a partnership with Mr. Brydon (Ray Marsh Brydon) of the Rice Bros. Circus. I hope this is not so as Rice Bros. reputation has been very bad. Honesty has no place on that outfit.

"The heat wave sure hurt business in the circus business. We did little or no business for about twenty five days. I hear the Barnes show went about twenty thousand on the wrong side of the ledger. They also say the Ringling business was very slow during the heat. It is hard to know the truth about the different shows as they all write such exaggerated articles in the *Billboard*.

"Well we are always happy to hear from you so do not put us off your letter list. Mrs. Hawkins joins me in thanking you again for your kindness, and with every best wish, I am, Sincerely (signed) Bud Hawkins."

Below the signature was typed "Perm. Address 3830 Drakewood Drive, Hyde Park, Cincinnati, Ohio."



Sverre Braathen, Al Sigsbee, general agent, Harry Haag, equestrian director and Bud Hawkins posed in front of the ticket wagon of the Bud Hawkins Circus in Elkhorn, Wisconsin June 21, 1936. Illinois State University, Special Collections, Milner Library.

The Bud Hawkins Circus of 1936 had lasted only three and a half months, but the Maynard Bros. show had survived only that many weeks. Even though so many of the newcomers faltered along the way the 1936 circus season was termed in the annual *Billboard* summary as being "excellent." The report said that some shows had to battle mud and rain in the early spring and extreme heat during midsummer but most of the circuses on the road had lengthy tours. The four railroad shows did well, both Ringling-Barnum and Cole Bros.-Clyde Beatty had much better takes than in 1935. The late Theo Forstall, at the time treasurer of Al G. Barnes, told me the Barnes show had a good 1936 season, much better than in 1937 which was surprising to hear. Even the E. H. Jones 2 car Cooper Bros. Circus on a tour of Canada in 1936 had a profitable season. The big motorized circuses, Downie Bros., Tom Mix and Russell Bros. all claimed good takes.

It is interesting to note that Bud Hawkins blamed much of his troubles on his agent Albert Sigsbee. This was a fairly common complaint by shows in those days. It is not known for sure how long Sigsbee stayed as general agent for Bud Hawkins but in mid-July the show advertised in *Billboard* for "an advance man with own car." In the same ad the show also wanted "big show act doing two or more with housecar, and workingmen who drive trucks." It can be observed in the letter

to Bill Kasiska that Mr. Hawkins named as one of his problems, "changing people." The several ads placed during the short season indicates there must have been considerable turnover in personnel, which can be a major problem, especially on a small show.

There is no indication the show was ever able to lease an elephant, with own transportation, as so advertised by Hawkins. This is not particularly unusual as in those days small circuses often did not have an elephant in their performance.

Of special interest to readers when telling the Bud Hawkins story is the appearance in the program of Obert Miller, father of Kelly and Dorey Miller. After the Hawkins circus closed the *Billboard* reported that Obert Miller's four pony drill and canine pets were with the Atterbury Bros. Circus. It is said that Miller replaced Gordon Smith who had left the Atterbury show to play fairs. Atterbury was currently playing a route through Illinois, Indiana and Kentucky. In 1937 Obert Miller framed his own show, Miller Bros. Circus, and a year later began using the now famous title Al G. Kelly & Miller Bros. Circus.

What happened to Bud Hawkins in future seasons is not documented but in any event the short lived title of Bud Hawkins Trained Animal Circus quietly faded into history after its so brief moment in the circus world in 1936.

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# Standing Riders and Their Acrobatic Art

PART TWO  
BY John Daniel Draper

## May Wirth

May Wirth, the great Australian bareback rider, was the first woman to do a double backward somersault from one horse to another running in tandem. By 1913 on the Barnum & Bailey Circus she was regularly doing this somersault blindfolded.

Her backward somersaults, three in quick succession over banners while the horse made one circuit of the ring, were breath taking. Also, without the use of any launching device, she could spring straight up from the ring floor to the back of a cantering horse with a twenty inch basket fastened to each of her feet. These marvelous presentations never failed to win the admiration and hearty applause of the audience.

A summary of May Wirth's life and work is given in the article: "May Wirth," by J. D. Draper. *White Tops*, March-April 1979.

## Hannefords

This is the seventy fourth consecutive season that members of the Hanneford family have been performing before the public in the United States.

The family came to the United States in 1915 from the Blackpool Tower Circus in England and joined the Barnum & Bailey Circus at Madison Square Garden. At that time it consisted of Elizabeth "Nana" Hanneford and her sons and daughter: Edwin (1891-1967), George (1895-1972) and Elizabeth. This act was on Barnum & Bailey through 1918 and continued on Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey in 1919, followed by three seasons on Sells-Floto (1920-1922). By that time both sons had married and George established his own act which existed separately until his death.

In the meanwhile, Edwin (Poodles), in addition to making movies in Hollywood, spent two additional years on Sells-Floto (1926, 1929) and played a variety of indoor shows and vaudeville, including the New York Hippodrome (1925), as well as dates in France, Germany and London's Olympia (winter of 1929-30). Beginning in the 1930's he and his company were on Hagenbeck-Wallace (1931-1933, 1937, 1938), Al G. Barnes (1934, 1937), Gorman Bros.



This twenty sheet lithograph, featuring the Hannefords, was used by Barnum & Bailey in 1917. All illustrations are from the Circus World Museum collection unless otherwise noted.

(1935, 1936), E. K. Fernandez (1939), Cole Bros. (1942, 1943), Arthur Bros. (1944), Cronin Bros. (1945), Yankee Patterson (1945), Frank Wirth (1948), Hagen Bros. (1949), Clyde Bros. (1950), Hamid-Morton (1953), Polack

Bros. (1954), Bailey Bros. & Cristiani (1955). Poodles did clowning on Clyde Beatty (1956). He held the whip for the George Hanneford, Jr. riding act on Hamid-Morton (1961) and on Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey in 1962, 1963 and 1965. The rest of the years were spent playing engagements at fairs, parks and Shrine circuses.

"Nana" was the ringmistress with the act for many years until her death in 1953 at the age of eighty three. Poodles' daughter Gracie rode a principal act and a carrying act with him, as did his sister Elizabeth in the early years, and his wife, Grace White, appeared in the act through the 1940's.



Poodles was the great riding clown. His mounts and dismounts without a running board, as many as twenty six times in succession, were a marvel. Although usually not appearing as a conventional somersault rider, he did somersaults from a horse in some of the most outlandish ways, appearing to be flying off through the air in a bundle. His comedy was great because it was all so natural. He reintroduced comedy bareback riding into the United States and his greatest tribute was the fact that so many other riding acts soon had a clown rider who imitated his style.

Strobridge produced this Hanneford bill, featuring "Poodles," for the Sells-Floto Circus in 1921.



The George Hanneford family in 1941. Left to right George, Jr., Doris, George, Sr., Kathryn and Tommy. Pfening Archives.

Over the years, the George Hanneford troupe appeared on the following: Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey (1925), vaudeville (1925), New York Hippodrome (1926), Sells-Floto (1927, 1928), Olympia in London combined with Poodles (winter of 1929-30), Downie Bros. (1929, 1932-1936), dates (1930, 1931, 1938), Wirth & Hamid (1931), Walter L. Main (1931), Tom Mix (1937), Hamid-Morton (1940, 1941, 1943), Hunt Bros. (1942), Barnes Bros. (1944-1947), Clyde Bros. (1946, 1968), Clyde Beatty (1948, 1952-1955), Atayde Bros. in Mexico City (1948, winter of 1953-54, 1960), Frank Wirth (1949), Cole Bros. (1950), Tom Packs (1951, 1952), Polack Bros. (1956-1958), Al Dobritch (1962), New York World's Fair (1964), Circus Hall of Fame (1966), Hanneford Circus (1969-1971). In the other years a variety of Shrine and fair dates were played.

As in the case with Poodles Hanneford's company, from time to time some performers were employed in addition to the family members. The large family act was developed with a pyramid of plumed lady riders in gorgeous costumes on a number of horses presenting a triumphal spectacle. Outstanding were Poodles' big act in 1938 that had eleven girl riders and the George Hanneford Troupe of 1970 that included Enrico, Rosa, Isabel and Martha Suarez. Basically, the George Hanneford riding act in the late 1940's and the 1950's

consisted of George, daughter Kay Frances (1933-1976) and sons George Jr. and Tommy. Mrs. Kate Hanneford was the ringmistress with the whip. At one time George Hanneford, in addition to doing a clown act similar to that of his brother Poodles, was a bareback somersault rider who also did the horse to horse somersault. Both of his sons learned and performed this difficult feat. Kay Frances rode a beautiful principal act with feathered hoop jumping as well as a carrying act, usually with Tommy. Also, Tommy and Kay, as the Martells, were top notch equilibrists on the rolo-bolo. As a novelty feature, a dog sat on Tommy's head as he balanced on the teeter-board. George, Jr. and Kay were skilled trampoline performers.

In 1960 George, Jr. started his own riding act while Tommy and Kay Frances continued with the original George Hanneford act. After the death of

Tommy Hanneford, known as the "riding fool," is shown in his great clown routine that rivaled that of his famous uncle Poodles.



In the mid 1970s the George Hanneford, Jr. riding act appeared with Rudy Bros. Seated on the horse from left to right are George's daughter Cathy, his wife Victoria and Diane Small. George is standing at right.

George Hanneford, Sr. this original act became the nucleus of Tommy's Royal Hanneford Circus. In the first year with his own act, George Hanneford, Jr. took his bareback troupe to Mexico with Atayde. The next year on Hamid-Morton he presented both his riding act and the Georgian trio, a revolving perch act on the shoulder balance. His wife, Victoria George, performed with him. She was both an aerialist and a rider. These acts continued on Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey (1962-1965). Subsequently he was on Polack Bros. (1968, 1969), Hubert Castle (1970, 1971), Hamid-Morton (1972), Gatti Charles (1973) and Rudy Bros. (1974, 1975).

George's Internationale Equestriole was on Polack Bros. in 1969. This act marked one of the important milestones of his career. For this equestrian presentation he mastered the unusual art of Cossack riding just as he had previously mastered classic principal somersault riding and the outlandish comedy of the equestrian clown. Vickie was ringmistress for the act. She also designed and made all the costumes and helped train the young riders that appeared with them.

He had his Hanneford Family Circus out in two units in 1976, one at Lake George, New York, and the other at the Circus Hall of Fame in

Sarasota, Florida. His nine year old daughter, Cathy, was riding a principal act that year at Lake George. George 3rd was performing on the trampoline with his sister and dad. The unit at Sarasota featured Timmy Loyal in the Justino Loyal riding act. The next year James Zoppe, another rising bareback star, was on his show.

A decade later, Catherine was a very attractive young lady of twenty, presenting an unforgettable five Arabian liberty horse display and a three elephant act on the family show. Tommy Hanneford had his Royal Hanneford Circus in full operation in 1975. His wife Struppi (nee Gertrude Zimmerman), as early as 1958, performed as Princess Tajana in a beautiful aerial display. Later she appeared in the Tommy Hanneford riding act and in 1972 she presented Frank Simpson's leopard act. In 1975 she was working with an elephant and an uncaged panther and still later with a lion and tigers. More recently she has served as the aerial director of the show.

Tommy in the tradition of his famous uncle, "Poodles," early perfected his role as the "riding fool," a designation once used for the clowning of his father George. He has maintained a traditional riding act of high quality in which have appeared young acrobatic equestrians of merit such as Peter Haubner (1972-1977) and Mark Karoly from 1978 until the present. Mark is the son of Evy Karoly, a well known bareback and dressage rider, who was on Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey in 1956. Tommy taught Mark the art of somersault riding. Today Mark does a horse to horse somersault with full body twist. In commenting on his training, Mark said: "Tommy has been just a great teacher. In fact, he's got to be the greatest bareback teacher in the world."

By 1982 Hanneford had also taught his young niece, Nellie, the art of ballerina riding on horseback.

Aside from his duties of recruiting, encouraging and instructing young performers and his responsibilities in the management of a circus, Tom Hanneford has also become, with his Royal Hanneford Circus, a prominent producer of Shrine circuses in America.

#### Rieffenachs

The Rieffenachs' riding act featured athletic acrobatics by sisters Mitzi, Rose and Betty, by their brother James and by Clarence Bruce, the husband of



The Rieffenach riding act on Ringling-Barnum in 1934. Mitzie, Rose and Betty are shown with brother Jimmy.

Rose. The mother Maria served as the ringmistress. The members of this family were long term performers on Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey (1922 through 1937). They were on Al G. Barnes in 1938, played dates in 1939 and at least some members of the family were on Cole Bros. for the years from 1940 until 1945. In 1944 James rode with the Joe Hodgini act on Cole Bros. and in 1945 he died of a heart attack early in the season while on that show. The family act also appeared on Santos and Artigas in Cuba in the fall of 1930 and on Bertram Mills in London in the off-season in 1932.

Besides the big family act, in which Clarence Bruce did somersault riding and topped that with twisting somersaults from horse to horse in tandem, Mitzi and Rose did statuary posing and balancing on their milk white horses, an act that was noted for its beauty and daring. "Just to see them walk into the middle ring is a privilege, one seldom sees such sculptured grace. Once mounted on their horses, their posing is an act that one can see many times and ask for more." This posing and carrying act of the sisters was always done on pad horses while the main family

riding act was presented on bareback horses.

The "dude" clown riding of Clarry Bruce on a small, fleet horse was a sight no person could ever forget. "It is the fastest bareback riding ever seen in circusdom and this amazingly agile comic makes it on one foot as he simulates an off-balance stance all the way. In other words, audiences are led to believe that he is falling off at every instance."

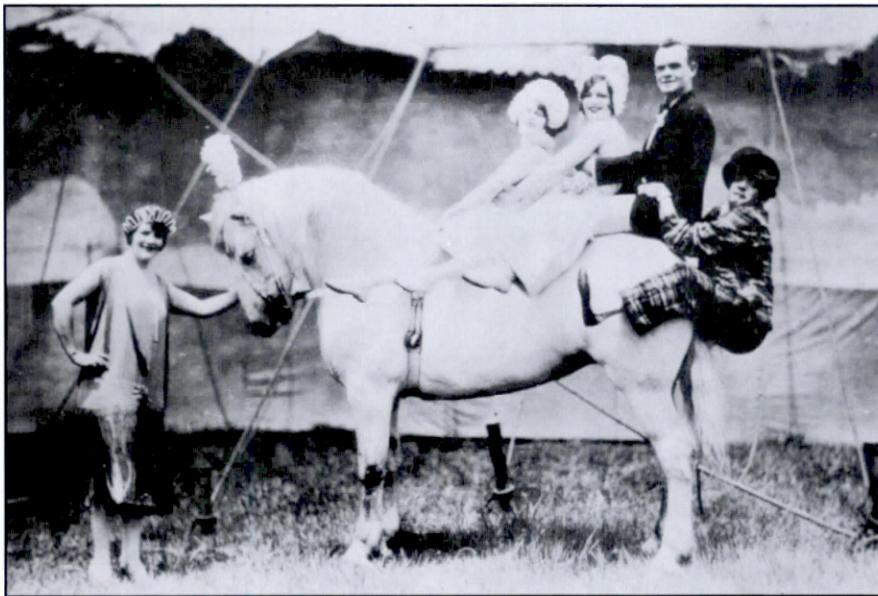
#### Hollis-McCree Troupe

The Hollis-McCree Troupe, made up of Melvin "Pinkie" Hollis and wife Bessie and Reno and Isabel McCree, was in existence for only three seasons total, beginning in 1928 on Sparks and continuing for the next two seasons on John Robinson's. The latter season actually opened on Sells-Floto at the Chicago Stadium and then transferred to John Robinson's Circus. The clever clowning in this act was done by Reno McCree, Jr. in the style of Poodles Hanneford.

Melvin was the son of Orrin Hollis, a famous somersault rider. Melvin Hollis and his wife had worked in a similar comic act with Walter and Flora Guice on Sparks in 1920 and 1923. He was a principal bareback somersault rider who had appeared on a number of shows: Campbell Bros. (1909, 1911), Cole Bros. (1912), Downie & Wheeler (1913), Sun Bros. (1917), Sparks (1917-1923), Gentry-Patterson (1924), dates (1925), Walter L. Main (1926) and Gentry Bros. (1927).

Reno McCree, Jr. was the son of Reno McCree and Blanche Reed. He was a half brother of Bernie Griggs, another bareback rider and clown. Reno, Jr. had been in the great Hagenbeck-Wallace train wreck in 1918 and suffered some injury that led him to turn to clown riding. He starred on Ringling Bros. from 1914 through 1917 in the McCree-Davenport riding act and was there in 1916 when his father dropped dead as he stepped from the ring. He was on John Robinson's (1922, 1926) and on Sells-Floto (1927).

In the fall of 1916 Reno and Melvin had planned a joint riding act for 1917 but their plans did not come to fruition. Now on Sparks in 1928 they had their comedy act where Hollis rode straight and McCree was featured as "America's Premier Riding Comedian." Although several horses were always used in the "family" riding act, at the conclusion it was traditional for all or most of the



The Hollis-McCree troupe was a star attraction of Sparks in 1928 and on John Robinson in 1929 and 1930. Left to right Isabel McCree, Bessie Hollis, Melvin Hollis and Reno McCree, Jr.

riders to mount one horse to be carried from the ring. The clown inevitably took his position at the tail end where he held on precariously.

This act was very well received as was the principal riding of both Bessie and Isabel. Pinkie Hollis also rode his usual high quality principal act.

Following the 1930 season these two families went their separate ways. Melvin Hollis and his wife did an equestrian carrying act on Lewis Bros. in 1932 and Melvin clowned in the Hollis riding act and was equestrian director on Barnett in 1935. By 1940 he and Bessie were playing night club engagements including the "Cat and Fiddle" in Cincinnati. The McCree's were on the Dutton Circus in 1931 where Reno did comedy riding, leaps and tumbling and Isabel was in the equestrian revue and did a principal act. In 1932 McCree was on Sells-Floto and in 1934 on Gorman Bros. where he received a knee injury that ended his riding career. He then turned to full time clowning. Isabel in 1934 was with the George Hanneford troupe on Downie Bros.

#### Loyal-Repensky Family

The Loyal-Repenskys came to America from Europe in 1932 and appeared on Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey at Madison Square Garden in New York City and for the balance of the season on Sells-Floto. They performed on Al G. Barnes (1933), Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey (1934-1938, 1943-1945), Cole Bros. (1939,

1940), dates (1941, 1942), Hamid Morton (1946, 1947), Barnes-Carruthers (1948), Polack Bros. (1950), Atayde (1951), Giustino Loyal's Gran Circo Americano (1951). When in London in January of 1935 with Bertram Mills, the Loyals gave a command performance before the Queen.

According to Fred Bradna, writing in 1952, this family produced the biggest equestrian thrill: "The Loyal-Repensky family combined five horses, four Roman stands and three top mounters into a galloping pyramid of seven persons. Those who saw this act insisted that it must be an illusion since it was impossible. Most family acts employ one horse, all the turns being accomplished as solos until the finish when everyone piles on the same mount. The Loyal-

The Loyal-Repenskys used this tally ho in their act in the early 1940s. Left to right on horse are Albertina and Giustino Loyal; Aldemaro Catarzi; in drivers seat, Zefta; Germana and Es-

Repenskys worked with teams of two, three, four and five mounts, giving much greater dimension to the 'jockey act' than any other troupe has achieved."

Giustino Loyal left the family in 1945 and formed his own riding troupe on Cole Bros. That year it consisted of Freddie and Ethel Freeman, Giustino and wife Ermide, Jinx Adams, Gee Gee Engesser and Pat Scott, who served as ringmistress. The next year on Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey his troupe was made up of Ermide, Jinx Louchak, Molly Locke, Marian Seifert, Ernestine Clarke, Pat Walsh, Lucretia Darnay and Geraldine Hill. In the following years he had riding acts on Polack Bros. (1947, 1950), Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey (1948, 1949, 1952, 1955-1957, 1959), his own Gran Circo Americano in Puerto Rico (1951), Hunt Bros. (1954), Atayde (1950, 1955). He was the equestrian director of Cristiani Bros. in 1960. In 1949 his troupe contained, in addition to himself, Aldo Cristiani, Lucretia Darnay, Andi Bogino, Katherine Kramer, Rusty Parent, Fay Romig and Elizabeth Wright.

Giustino was a great rider. He performed the horse to horse somersault as early as 1932 on Sells-Floto. He regularly did a jump-up with a regulation size sulky and a back somersault from horse to horse through a hoop with his sister Zefta passing under him from horse to horse. Zefta was probably the only woman, other than May Wirth and Rosa Rosalind, to ever do the horse to horse somersault. Two other sisters did a very remarkable trick at Madison Square Garden in 1935. Germana, while

terina Loyal were supported by Leslie Brodkorb. Joe Galasso was at the top of the ladder, Jules Loyal rode on the wheel while Violet Herman and Simona Loyal were at the back of the vehicle.



standing on a trotting horse, supported Esterina in a head to head balance. Another sensational trick presented the only five sisters in the world making a jump-up to the horse simultaneously.

All members of the family were Loyals, there were no Repenskys. This name came from the maiden name of Jules Loyal's mother who was Antoinette Repensky. Jules was the father of Lucio and Alphonse and the five sisters: Albertina, Zelta, Germana, Esterina and Simona. On rare occasions the family used the name "Eris" or "Iris" for their bareback act. The name "Seven Brannocks" was used for their three high teeterboard act which they initiated in 1937.

The tallyho wagon act originated in Europe in 1911. The wagon was stored in France until 1941-42 when it was brought to this country. The act was well liked by Mike Barnes of Barnes-Carruthers. It was presented only on vaudeville and fair dates, never on circuses under canvas. Papa Jules was the only one who ever rode the rear wheel in the act. The wagon was lost when it was confiscated in Cuba.

Today the professional name of Loyal is kept alive by two separate bareback acts. Timmy Loyal has been trained by his father Giustino and does a series of tricks including hands to feet flip-flops, pirouettes and somersaults on one horse. His climax is a horse to horse somersault done with all the finesse of a seasoned trouper. Quite often the Enrico Suarez family of bareback riders appears with his act. In the last decade his troupe has been on, among others, Hoxie Bros., Polack Bros., Shrine shows, Great American Circus and Bentley Bros.

Meanwhile, his cousin Lucy, the daughter of Alphonse Loyal, has performed with the Alphonse Loyal riding acts since the early 1960's on Al G. Kelly and Miller Bros. Circus and on Carson & Barnes Circus. Today she rides a bareback principal act that features posing, jumping rope or leaping through hoops and over banners. Also she has developed a comic family riding act that appears on Carson & Barnes.

#### Ernestine Clarke

Ernestine Clarke, principal bareback rider and flying return trapeze artist, was featured on Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey from 1943 through 1947. In 1946 she was described: "Going over her turns is a beautiful girl in multi-colored jockey blouse and satin tights. She is pretty enough to be a Powers model. She is Ernestine Clarke,



Ernestine Clarke, principal bareback rider and flying return trapeze performer. Pfening Archives.

an ace equestrienne and her family includes five generations of Big Top headliners."

The daughter of Ernest Clarke, famed pioneer triple somersault trapeze performer and bareback rider, and of the former Elizabeth Hanneford of the great Hanneford riding family, Ernestine debuted at the Sells-Floto Chicago engagement in 1932 in the Clarke riding act. A youthful performer on Al G. Barnes (1934) and Gorman Bros. (1935), she rode a principal act on Cole Bros. (1936) and was in another bareback act with her father and her uncle, Percy Clarke. She was on Yankee Patterson as a principal rider for parts of 1937, 1939 and 1940. In 1938 on Tom Mix, in addition to her principal act and participation in the big twelve person Clarke bareback number, she also debuted as a flyer in the Clarkonian act.

Her principal act was a feature of the British War Relief Show in Los Angeles in 1940. During that season she was learning the double somersault and the two and one half in the flying return from her uncles, Percy and Charlie. At that time Freddie Freeman said of

her: "Ernestine Clarke has developed into one of the finest performers this writer has ever seen. She can do anything and do it well."

After her father's death early in 1941, she was on Russell Bros. in flying and riding acts, both as a principal rider and in the big bareback act. This was the last year that her mother rode. Ernestine also appeared in the movie "Sunny." By 1942 she was really showing her versatility. On Cole Bros. she rode a principal act, was bareback ballerina, was with the Rieffenach troupe, appeared in opening spec, worked on the Spanish web and rode a high school horse. The next season, her first on Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey, she was in one of Art Concello's flying return acts. She was also on the Polack Bros. Shrine date at Columbus, Ohio where she

performed in the Poodles Hanneford act. In 1944 on Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey, with her own flying act, she brought back to this show the Clarkonian title for the first time in eighteen years. Also, as a featured bareback rider, she was the beautiful ballerina with Lou Jacobs, the clown, who appeared in a photo on the cover of the program for that year.

By 1946 Ernestine was a featured member of Giustino Loyal's new riding act where she was unique in her high jumps and midair splits over the galloping Percheron as well as acrobatic dancing on bareback. Also, in jumping from the horse, she could position her legs parallel to the horse's back, at the same time touching her toes. She was the only one to display such daring. On Polack Bros. at the Dayton Shrine Show that year, she, with Arturo Konoyot, presented eight large white horses, truly at liberty, with no harness or trappings. This was the year of her marriage to Parley Baer, then program manager of KSL, Salt Lake City, Utah. The ceremony took place in April at the Little Church Around the Corner in New York City, the same setting as for the marriage of her parents in 1920.

Although formally retiring from the ring soon after, she was always available when needed. In 1950 she flew in



from California to Chicago and, without rehearsal, substituted for Kay Frances on Cole Bros. in the George Hannenford act. The next year on Polack Bros. she replaced Jack Joyce in a dressage act with Ostermaier's white manege horse.

In later years, often with her husband, who has been variously circus manager, performance director, owner, ringmaster and announcer, as well as performer, she has presented pony drills, directed a bareback act or served as executive secretary on a list of shows which includes: American National (1972, 1974), Miller-Johnson (1973), Mid American Circus (1975), Polack Bros. (1977), Paul Kaye's Continental Circus (1976, 1977), Jerry Booker's Early American Circus (1977). Her love for the circus has never diminished.

#### Cristianis

The Cristiani riding act arrived in the United States from Circus Schumann in Berlin, Germany in April of 1934 with seventeen people and six horses. Among the family riders who appeared that first year on Hagenbeck-Wallace were Chita, Cosetta, Oscar, Lucio, Daviso, Belmonte and Mogador. On Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey the act finally grew to eleven members, the largest such act that had ever appeared in this country. The Cristianis were on Hagenbeck-Wallace again in 1935, on Al G. Barnes (1936, 1937), Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey (1938-1943) and Cole Bros. (1945-1948).

Seven of the Cristianis each did principal riding. Daviso also did a balancing perch act in which he held a thirty foot pole on which a young woman stood on her head. Louise, wife of Daviso, did a high single trapeze act. In

The Cristiani family of riders on Al G. Barnes in 1936 included Paraito, Corcata, Chita, Cosetta, Papa Ernesto, Mogador, Lucio, Oscar, Daviso and Belmonte. Pfening Archives

addition to riding, the family showed its versatility in a teeterboard routine. "They were a circus in themselves."

As a team of riders, the Cristianis did some remarkable tricks. In one, five of the brothers--Oscar, Lucio, Mogador, Belmonte and Daviso--made a simultaneous fork jump to the back of a horse cantering in the ring. In the passing leap, two somersaults were thrown at the same time, one by Lucio from the first to the second horse as Belmonte passed under him from the second to the first horse. In the so called "suicide

At the same instance Lucio Cristiani somersaulted from the first to second horse, Belmonte somersaulted from the second to the third horse and Mogador somersaulted from the third horse to the ground, all through hoops.

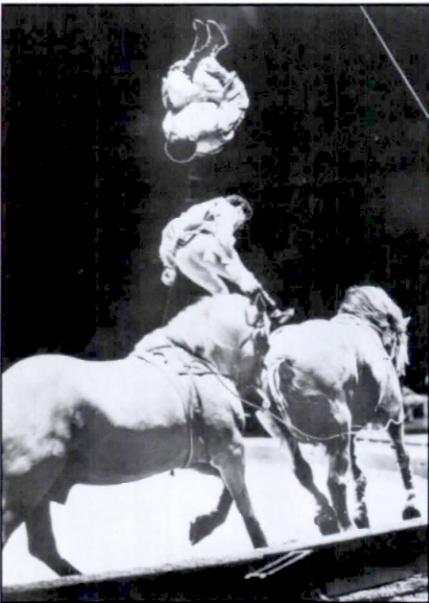
act," there was simultaneous somersaulting by three riders through hoops, Lucio from the first to the second horse, Belmonte from the second to the third horse and Mogador from the third horse to the ground. The horses were running in single file in the ring.

The most sensational of all of these great riders was Lucio. On a single horse he did fork jumps over hurdles and single and double backward and forward somersaults. He also pirouetted from one horse to another. He could balance people on his shoulders or head with the horse at full gallop. He could also guide horses through intricate liberty routines or demonstrate all of the dressage steps.

However, his greatest feat was the unbelievable somersault from one horse completely over the back of a second to the third horse, all three running in echelon in a forty two foot ring. The person with the whip who controlled the strides of these horses had to be very experienced. A little reflection will reveal how difficult this act really was. Lucio not only had to take off on the "coming up" stride of the first horse, but he had to somersault sideways over the second to land on the "going down" stride of the third horse. The sidewise direction was necessary because the third horse was not in a straight line behind him due to the ring curvature. Besides this, it must be remembered that the point of impact on the third horse, that very small area on the horse's back, was both moving forward and going up and down at the same time. There is no record of any other rider ever having done this trick.

It is probably anticlimactic at this point to mention that Lucio also did a good clown act, an outstanding feature of which was his famous "step-off," facing backwards, from the rump of a cantering horse.





Lucio and Belmonte Cristiani executing the passing leap on Ringling-Barnum in 1939. Two simultaneous somersaults were thrown, one by Lucio from the first to second horse as Belmonte passed under him from the second to the first horse.

The greatest tribute that can be given to Lucio is to say that to have not seen him perform was to have missed a chance of a lifetime.

#### Zoppe-Zavatta Riding Acts

The Zoppe-Zavatta families were descended from Gilda Belli (1881-1946), who was married first to Francisco Zoppe and then to Armando Zavatta (1881-1931), and from Emma Zoppe, a sister of Francisco, who married her distant cousin Luigi Zoppe. These families produced great riders and some branches also specialized in all forms of equilibristic skills such as unsupported ladder acts and unicycle riding. Emphasis will be given here only to the riding acts.

Secondo Zoppe (1906-1951) and Aurelia Zavatta were children of Gilda Belli. Secondo's children are Joseph, Enrico, Germana, Gilda and Yolande. Aurelia married Mel Hall and her children are James, Ervin, Carmen and Jeanne. Roger and the twins, Dennis and Denise, are sons and daughter of Joseph Zoppe. James Zoppe is also a grandson of Secondo Zoppe. The son of Emma and Luigi is Alberto, whose children are Giovanni, Carla and Tosca. Alberto's sister Ruggera was another very talented rider.

The Aurelia Troupe was comprised of eight Zoppe-Zavattas who arrived in America to perform with Cole Bros. in 1936. It featured Secondo and his half

sister Aurelia, who was publicized on lithographs in 1937 (Cole Bros.) and 1938 (Robbins Bros.) as Rita Aurelia. Secondo, the head of the family, did the horse to horse somersault and Aurelia was a very graceful and beautiful principal rider as well as a member of the family act. In 1947 he and his wife, together with Enrico, Germana and Joe, rode on Hunt Brothers. Secondo died prematurely while rehearsing for the 1951 season with Hamid-Morton.

Joseph, with his wife Peggy Harrison, developed a family act which included his brother Enrico and wife Jo Ann and sister Yolanda as well as Joe's children. In 1962 their presentation featured pyramids, handstands and horse to horse somersaults. There were also well-timed comedy bits. By 1964 Joe, his wife and children were performing their "Original Indian Spectacular." The Zoppe twins spun on five foot arrows attached to a shaft held on the shoulders of their parents as the parents rode Roman style on three horses. There were also the usual horse to horse somersaults. By 1970 the Indian act was replaced by the "Bedouin Riders" who dressed as Arabians. This format, which eventually became that of Roger Zoppe's act, continued through at least 1979. As a second act, Roger and Dennis presented their "Herman and Petunia" hilarious Roman riding, the highlight of which was the comic shenanigans of two zany bareback riders who got into some of the funniest predicaments imaginable. The female character "Petunia" was portrayed by Dennis. From 1962 until 1980 these acts appeared chiefly on Shrine shows and on Polack Bros. (1965), Gil Gray (1970), Tom Packs (1971), Atayde (1974, 1976, 1977), Hubert Castle (1973, 1975, 1976), Hubler (1978) and

The Zavatta Family on Cole Bros. Circus in 1936, their first year in the United States. Pfening Archives.

Royal Hanneford Circus (1979). In 1981 both the "Herman and Petuna" act and a new five member version of the Indian act called "Los Jinetes Indios" were on Atayde.

Alberto Zoppe brought his bareback riding troupe to America in 1948. With him were his attractive and talented sister Ruggera and a cousin Cucciolo, the world's smallest stunt rider. At twenty years of age Cucciolo stood thirty eight inches tall. He made a big hit with Cecil B. DeMille during the filming of the movie "The Greatest Show On Earth." This troupe consisted of five women riders in addition to Alberto and Cucciolo. The climax of the act was a fast gallop on four horses by three riders riding Roman style and supporting a two high human pyramid. In a solo presentation Alberto somersaulted from horse to horse and in another instance he was holding Cucciolo in the palm of his hand as he stood on a bareback horse. Alberto's act appeared on Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey (1949-1952), Polack Bros. (1953), Tom Packs (1955), Hamid-Morton (1955), Shrine shows (1954, 1956), King Bros. (1956), Clyde Beatty (1957) and Clyde Bros. (1959, 1961).

After retiring his riding act about 1962 Alberto developed his animal revue which ultimately featured three horses, sixteen dogs, a rooster, a cat, a duck, a lioness, two adults and three children. The uncaged lioness rode on horseback as did the jockey dogs. There was a comedy riding mechanic turn for audience participation. In this presentation, his daughter and son, Carla and Giovanni, did bareback riding, demonstrating the way it should be done. His children began to participate about 1975. In 1977, as a ten year old youngster, Giovanni was the youngest person, at least in recent years, to complete a somersault feet to feet on the back of a galloping horse. Alberto's animal revue was seen on Clyde Beatty-





The Alberto Zoppe troupe on Ringling-Barnum in 1949. Cucciolo and Alberto are on top. Left to right Czeslaw Mrockowski, Jenny (Wallenda) Zoppe, Renzo Recelli (Bogino), Ruggera Zoppe, Fatima Marchani, Habiba Robbins and Nina Unis. Pfening Archives.

Cole Bros. (1962), Tom Packs (1962), Clyde Bros. (1968), Polack Bros. (1972), Garden Bros. (1973, 1977, 1978), Hamid-Morton (1974), Vorrhais Bros. (1975), Hoxie's Great American (1976), Shrine shows (1979, 1980), and Alberto Zoppe's Circus Italia (1982).

James Zoppe, a nephew of Joseph Zoppe, is a peerless bareback rider with grace of form, uncanny balance and beautiful style. His movement has the elegance of a ballet dancer and he lands from his high leaps and somersaults as lightly as a leaf. He debuted with his own troupe in 1978. He somersaults through a hoop while riding bareback and does a horse to horse somersault on galloping horses. His finish is a series of leaps through huge hoops set at two positions in the ring as his fast finish horse leaps over low hurdles while circling the ring.

James has appeared on a number of shows: Carden & Johnson (1975); Polack Bros. (1977, 1978); Dobritch, St. Louis Police Circus, Kennywood Park (Pittsburgh, Pa.), Garden Bros., Shrine dates all in 1979; and Bentley Bros., Hamid-Morton, Shrine dates (1980). In the summer of 1984 and the winter of 1984-85 he was on the

Big Apple Circus. In addition to his solo act he produced a big family type of act with twelve riders, mostly recruited from the Big Apple Circus company. Presently he is one of the outstanding performers in America.

#### Dorchester Troupe

The Dorchesters, also known as the



Royal Scotts, are third generation vaulting and somersaulting bareback riders from England. They present a very fast moving act interspersed with comedy. In 1956 this group, billed as the "world's fastest bareback riders with hazardous, hurricane horsemanship," consisted of Catherine and George Scott, Francis and Lilly Stebbing, Tony Fossett and Hillary Hession.

After appearing at Blackpool Tower Circus and on Chipperfield's Circus, these riders first performed in the United States on King Bros. & Cole Bros. Circus in 1955. For the next twelve seasons this troupe filled a number of engagements throughout this country, principally on Shrine circuses produced by Polack Bros., Hamid-Morton, Carden-Johnson and Tom Packs.

#### Zamperla Families

In 1973 the Napoleone Zamperla family accepted delivery from Lilli Kristen- sen of her rosinbacks after she had debuted with her leopard and panther act in the spring of that year.

At the same time the Bianco Zamperla family of Treviso, Italy arrived in America from Circus Atlas in Spain. That family consisted of the mother and father, Carmilla and Bianco, and five children: Gilda, Cinzia, Carmen, Armando and Lucio. In the riding act that they presented they built a pyramid as the two brothers rode Roman style on three horses and supported their three sisters in a column so as to give the equivalent of three high. Only the top mounter, Cinzia, stood on the shoulders of another member of the troupe. In another turn Armando threw somersaults on one horse. Other members of the troupe jumped through hoops and jumped rope in youthful exuberance. All of their work was done on bareback horses. In addition to the riding acts, Bianco and Lucio presented a lively act of nine lions and other family members offered feats of juggling.

After appearing on Shrine circuses in 1973 and on Polack Bros. in 1974, this troupe returned to Europe. In 1980 at the Seventh Monte Carlo International Festival, as representatives of the Italian Cirque Niemen, the Bianco Zamperlas received honors for their equestrian act that by then featured an equilibristic head to head stand on a trotting horse.

Napoleone, the brother of Bianco Zamperla, was in America as early as

The Dorchester troupe was made up of third generation vaulting and somersaulting riders from England. Pfening Archives

1959 when he appeared on Cristiani Bros. Circus on the bounding rope and in 1963 on Cristiani-Wallace Bros., where he was with the Lucio Cristiani riding troupe as well as a performer in the Zamperla family unicycle act. Gilda Zamperla, the wife of Lucio Cristiani, was also with these shows in both 1959 and 1963.

A bareback rider, she later did principal riding and also presented an uncaged leopard act.

Until 1973 when he acquired the Kristensen rosinbacks and began to build his own seven person riding act, Napoleone Zamperla had been known chiefly for his unicycle, trampoline and acrobatic presentations. The pad riding act that he now developed, called the Napoleones, was costumed in colorful Roman wardrobe and began with pyramids, muscle grinds and various carrying routines. It then featured his son Atos with single somersaults on a galloping horse, a horse to horse somersault and finally a somersault from a teeterboard to the back of a running horse. It was a very fast act enhanced with effective music.

This family in 1974 consisted of Napoleone and Francesco and the children: Mafalda, Atos age seventeen, Ernestina, Janey and Ermes. In 1977 Mafalda became the wife of James Zoppe and worked in his riding act. By 1984 Ermes was doing the horse to horse somersault.

This troupe was with Hubert Castle in 1974 as well as with Bill Kay on the West Coast and the Texas Shrine dates. Other shows with which they have appeared include Gatti-Charles (1975), Polack Bros. (1975), Hamid-Morton (1976, 1980), Gatini (1977, 1978), Bentley Bros. (1980).

For 1984 and 1985, on Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros., Napoleone and Christine (Tina) Zamperla presented excellent dressage acts on a Lipizzan and an Arabian horse, respectively. Then the Napoleone Roman riders entered, dressed in impressive wardrobe, posing in a mighty pyramid as an opener, followed by great acrobatic riding. Such a thrilling display never failed to please the audience.

#### Technical Terms That Apply to Riding Acts

**Ballerina rider:** A lady bareback rider, dressed in short dancer's skirt, close fitting bodice and ballet shoes, leaps through paper covered hoops. Also, as

she sits with toes pointed on the broad quarters of a rosinback, she toys with her cutting whip while a clown kneels on one knee in the sawdust to give his devotion.

**Banners and garters:** Broad flags and narrow ribbons are held horizontally for the rider to jump over. This act is usually performed by an equestrienne. It is traditional that the clown will hold the banner or swing the garters, the opposite end being fastened to a pole in the center of the ring.



The Zamperla troupe, left to right, top to bottom, Armando and Lucio, Gilda and Carmen, Cinzia on top. Bill Rhodes photo.

**Bounding jockey act:** The rider leaps frequently from the ground to the horse and back again.

**Buggy act:** A light four wheeled, high seated vehicle is pulled by two horses. Somersaults or leaps are executed by the man and the lady riders from the buggy to the horses and vice versa. The horses might then be unhitched and a regular double bareback act performed.

**Bursting the balloons:** Jumping through paper covered hoops is done by the ballerina or other standing rider as the horse canters around the ring.

**Carrying act:** A male rider standing on a horse carries a second person on his shoulders, usually a lady, as she

poses and does acrobatic feats. On rare occasions (Bradna & Derrick) these roles can be reversed. Also in other variations two men or two women can be employed in the act.

**Cossack riding:** This routine includes the rider's lying on his back across the horse's back with one foot in the loop attached to the surcingle and leaning back and downwards into the ring as he picks up handkerchiefs and other objects from the ground as the horse gallops along. In other routines the rider passes around the neck or under the belly of the horse while it canters at full speed.

**Courier of St. Petersburg:** Invented by Andrew Ducrow, in this act the rider mounts two horses Roman style. Forcing his mounts apart, he has other horses pass under his legs while he snatches up their reins as they go by, until he is driving as many as nine horses in tandem in the ring while straddling three more. This act depicts the journey of a courier to St. Petersburg, Russia and the horses passing underneath, with appropriate flags attached, represent the various countries through which he must travel in order to get there.

**Family riding act:** This is a large riding act involving as many as five or six horses cantering abreast in the ring with a human pyramid of eight or more riders formed on top of them, usually two and one half high. The members of the act may or may not be all members of one family.

**Fork jump or somersault from feet to fork:** Here the rider lands in a position sitting astride the horse.

**Hurdle act:** The rider leaps over hurdles.

**Jockey act:** This is the usual name for a bareback act presented by a mixed troupe of men and women. It is similar to voltige except that the rider spends more time on the horse's back and there are more feats of balance as the rider stands on one leg, jumps from his knees to a standing position, leaps over banners or turns somersaults, etc.

**Pad horse:** In contrast to a bareback horse, this horse carries a small platform or pad on which the rider stands to do his performance.

**Pas de deux:** Carrying act where the emphasis is on style rather than dash and excitement, for instance a gentleman in evening dress carrying a lady in ballet skirt.

**Pete Jenkins Act:** Introduced by Charles Sherwood in the 1850's, it features a rural rube character who comes

down noisily from the seats, forces his way into the ring and, after some argument with the ringmaster, clammers aboard a rosinback and attempts to ride bareback. At first he falls off, then hangs on precariously and finally, as he sheds his clown costume, he appears in his shining white tights as the star bareback rider.

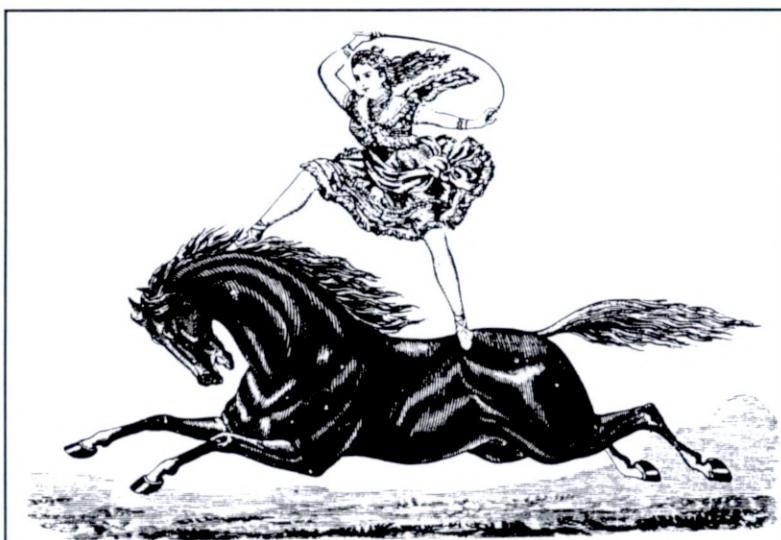
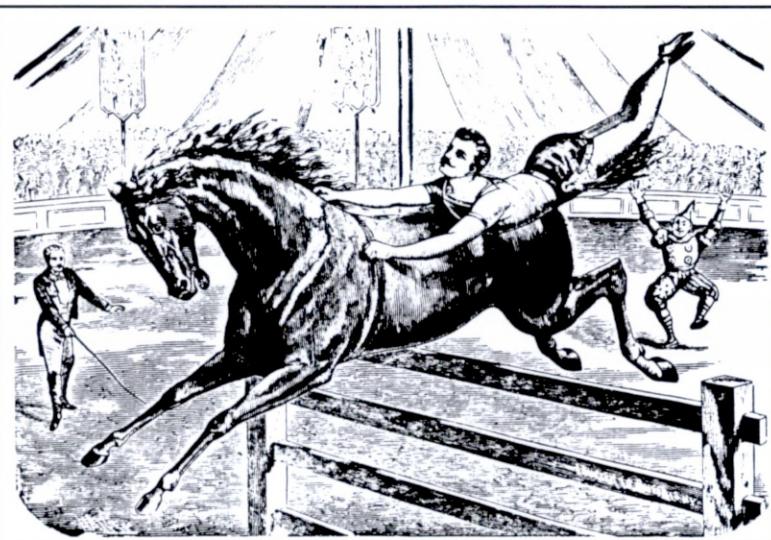
**Pirouette:** A full turn on the toes on one foot or in the air. On horseback this feat is usually more difficult than a somersault.

**Principal act or principal riding:** A single (solo) standing rider performing on a bareback horse or on a pad horse.

**Riding mechanic:** Invented by Spencer Q. Strokes in the mid 1800's, it has a central post that supports a revolving arm similar to that on a jib crane. At the top of the arm is a pulley through which a rope is passed, one end fastened to a belt around the rider and the other held by an attendant. The arm is pushed around the post so that the pulley is always above the horse. The attendant can take the weight of the bareback rider when he or she slips on the horse and thus prevents a serious fall. This device is used worldwide for training bareback riders.

**Rosinback or resinback:** A bareback horse is dusted with rosin to give the rider more traction. This horse has a broad back and must have a very even gait, being entirely insensitive to all noise and movement around him.

**Shoulder stand:** The rider is upside



These stock cuts from the Courier Co. illustrate male and female principal riders of the late 1800s.

down with one shoulder on the base of the horse's neck and his feet straight up in the air.

**Society circus or society act:** When applied to equestrians, it is usually a carriage or buggy act performed outdoors at a fair before a grandstand or on

the lawn of an estate, etc. Everything associated with the act is traditionally in white including the horses, the buggy and the costumes of the riders.

**Somersaults:** Backward back - The rider stands on the horse with his face to the horse's tail, somersaults backwards and lands in approximately the same position.

Forward forward - The rider stands on the horse facing the way the horse is moving and somersaults forward. This is more difficult to do because the rider cannot see where he is landing.

**Twisting somersault -** This is a somersault, usually backward, which is thrown simultaneously with a half pirouette.

**Surcingle:** A band or girth is passed around the body of the horse to which is attached the grips for doing vaulting to the horse's back.

**Understander:** In a pas de deux or carrying act, it is the person standing on the horse who carries the second person.

**Vault:** To execute a leap using the hands.

**Voltige:** In vaulting to the back of a horse, before the take-off both legs of the rider standing on the ground are well to the front. As the horse draws abreast, the rider's legs and body are thrown up and back as the rider pivots on his hands which are holding the grips. Momentarily, the body and legs are projected straight out, above the horse. Then the legs are parted and the body falls to a single knee balance, to a scissors or to a fork seat.

# CIRCUS REPORT

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# ADAM FOREPAUGH'S VEST POCKET

By Stuart Thayer (cribbed from C. H. Day)

Charles H. Day was not only a press agent and bill writer for circuses, but also a keen observer of the business and the people who populated it. His articles appear everywhere in the literature, *Billboard*, *New York Clipper*, *Sunday Evening Mercury*, etc. He even tried his hand at writing a circus history, but his research lacked a lot and much of what he wrote about events he hadn't participated in has turned out to be bunk. But he had an ear and an eye and has written some fine descriptions of showmen of his day.

One gem that we recently found is in the May 6, 1907, *Billboard*. It concerns Adam Forepaugh and his habit of squirreling away miscellaneous income. Prior to 1880 the privileges on the show were sold to outsiders. It was the custom of the privilege men to pay weekly a fixed sum in order to operate the side show, concert and candy stands. One day in 1879 as Day was speaking with the boss, George Middleton, the privilege man walked up and handed Forepaugh a wad of money. Forepaugh put it in his lefthand vest pocket and said to Day something on the order of, "I never take any of the ticket money, but anything else that's paid me I keep for myself."

Day then went on to list all the various sources of income the vest pocket swallowed. As we said, the show took



over the privileges in 1880 (Middleton was a rich man by then), so Forepaugh had to look elsewhere for his pocket money.

A charge was made to employees for the use of berths and staterooms on the train--the show provided cleaning and laundry of the bedding and swept out the cars. These charges were paid to Forepaugh.

The daily programs sold ad space to local and national merchants and these proceeds were pocketed.

A railroad paid \$500 per season to have its name on the watering tank that

wet down the hippodrome track during the performance: into the vest.

A man was allowed to run a ring-the-bell sledgehammer privilege and he paid Forepaugh directly.

Any pit shows that met the standards of the circus anted a percentage of their profit.

A patent medicine company paid for the privilege of handing out pamphlets extolling their product on the lot.

Elephant banners bought by local businesses increased the vest pocket load.

One of the clowns drew portraits of locals and split his fees with Forepaugh.

Two "clean, neat veterans," with missing limbs and framed discharge papers to prove their authenticity were allowed to ride the train and play a handorgan on streets on parade day and they fed the kitty from the coins they collected.

Finally, at day's end the "lot litter," hay, straw, paper and the like was shoveled together and sold to a local livery stable operator who used it for bedding horses. With that final payment ensconced in his vest pocket Forepaugh would order his horse and rig and make his way to the train, probably complaining how difficult it was to make a buck in those days.

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# ONLY BIG SHOW COMING

Chapter 4 Part One  
HOME ON THE RANGE

## Sells Brothers' Shows 1876-1880

By Orin C. King

The Great European Zoological Association, Museum, Menagerie, Royal Coliseum, Aquarium, Aviary, Polytechnic Institute, Equestrian Congress, Gigantic Double Circus, Thrilling Balloon Race and Centennial World's Fair on Wheels opened the season of 1876, in April, in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and in the months that followed worked its way westward to Kansas.

The show played many dates in Kansas, including, among others, the towns listed below: August 23, Ottawa; August 24, Garnett; August 25, Colony; August 26, Iola; September 1, Oswego; September 2, Chetopa; September 8, Longton; September 9, Sedan; September 11, Howard City; September 13, El Dorado; October 16, Clyde; October 17, Clay Center; October 20, Wamego; October 21, St. Marys.

Newspaper advertising for the Great European, compared to the brief announcements of local merchants, was lavish, using the same ad in every town, two columns and the length of the page, with only minor variations usually attributable to the vagaries of the individual papers. The imposing title of the show, consisting of twelve segments, was frequently rearranged, the various components being shuffled about, but no matter how extensive the juggling none of the elements was ever omitted.

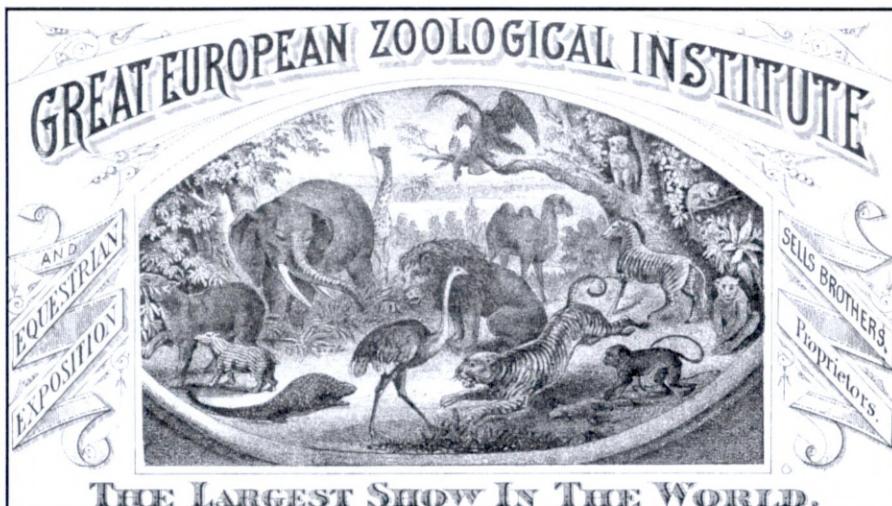
Every ad listed the show's "Eight Cardinal Features."

The menagerie headed the list, claiming 50 cages of wild beasts. The circus was still a questionable entertainment which, in the eyes of many beholders, was lacking in "refined and moral" characteristics and entrepreneurs were inclined to hide it behind the exhibitions of rare and wild animals which could be promoted with Biblical references. Noah had a tremendous menagerie aboard the Ark and was an inspiration to every American exhibitor. The Great European Zoological Association advertised the following animals--50 cages--most of which were not on the show:

"A Stupendous Menagerie Embracing Elephants, Camels, Dromedaries, Rhinoceros, Giraffe, Sea Lions, Tapirs, Eland, Vlacke Varc, Blaze Rock, Ostrich, Cassowary, Emue, a pair of zebras driven in harness, herd of Zebus, den of performing hyenas, huge Pythons, Cobras, Terrestrial Sloth, Lioness and Cubs, Kangaroos, Ibex, Chamois, wild Gazelle, Russian Reindeer, Polar Bear, Poonah Bear, Black Tiger, Black Leopard Horned Horse, Asiatic

of animals, an elephant, etc." During the winter the only wild animals mentioned in the Topeka press were an elephant, lion, leopard, wart hog, the zebra, the kangaroo, and an unspecified number of camels.

The second Cardinal Feature was "A Marvelous Museum, a College of Rare Relics, Automaton Wonders, Mechanical Triumphs, Animate Anomalies and curious objects, collected from every quarter of the globe."



This classy title, Great European Zoological Institute and Equestrian Exhibit, was high sounding for a wagon show. This letterhead was used during the 1876 season. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives unless otherwise noted.

Yak, Nyl Ghau or Blue Ox, Jaguars, Puma, Lama, Baboons, Apes, Monkeys, Albino Deer, Gold Spotted Leopard, Ocelots, and a grand Australian Bird Show enumerating over 200 gorgeously plumaged and language-gifted songsters."

Nearly every ad bore a cut of a giraffe and a rhinoceros, but there is no where any newspaper comment to confirm their presence. The Topeka *Daily Commonwealth*, October 8, reported the show as having "250 horses, 12 cages

The "Royal Colosseum--a new department, alone worth ten times the price of admission" comprised the third great feature. Included were Hindoo jugglers, the Satsuma Japanese, the El Nash Hamo Arabians, French Voltiguers, and Greco-Roman wrestlers.

The fourth Cardinal Feature consisted of "The Great Equestrian Congress, embracing the Champion riders of every land. Positively the finest equestrians on earth."

The Trained Animal Department--the fifth great feature--was grossly exaggerated. "Five times as many trained animals as any other show ever exhibited. Trained Elephants, Trained Zebras in harness, Trained Lions, Tigers and Leopards, Trained Dogs, Goats and Monkeys, Trained Horses, Ponies and Mules." The only certain truth concern-

ing performing animals was the superbly trained dogs, goats and monkeys of Willis Cobb.

"6th. Elegant Double Circus--100 performers, Five Lovely Lady Equestrians (sic.), Parisian Sensational Troupe of Female Gymnasts, Seven bareback riders, twenty-five Gymnasts and Acrobats, best leapers and tumblers in the world, led by Sam Rhinehart, 'the Noblest Roman of them all,' Four great Clowns, and a host of auxiliaries."

"The Wonderful Steam Calliope; plays music by Steam that may be heard five miles, cost a fortune, weighs five tons," comprised the 7th Cardinal Feature.

The last, number eight, was the "Thrilling Balloon Race--Two Mammoth Balloons, each carrying aloft human beings, will ascend simultaneously and race through the clouds."

The balloon ascensions and the glorious music of the steam piano were announced as "free to everybody."

"The PROCESSION is the grandest ever seen, it will pay to come twenty miles to see it, most magnificent and costly pageant ever witnessed. A GRAND DAILY FOURTH OF JULY JUBILEE."

To avoid any misunderstandings the Sells brothers proclaimed that, "This is not a paltry railroad show, But a Magnificent Caravan on Wheels, Employing nearly One Thousand Men and Horses and moves through the highway passing your very door. Its appearance creates the wildest enthusiasm, people drop their work and come en masse to celebrate. Remember the name GREAT EUROPEAN."

"Admission only 50 cents., Children under 9 years of age 25 cents."

During the Kansas dates the Great European used a small number of handouts all of which were purported to be quotes from newspapers in distant cities. Not one Kansan in a thousand had any way of verifying statements attributed to the Mt. Carmel, Illinois, *Signal*; Chicago *Times*; Baltimore *Daily Sun*; Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, *Examiner*; Columbus, Ohio, *Daily Journal*; Burlington, Vermont, *Gazette*; and the Danville, Virginia, *News*. To compound the matter no dates were given for the towns "quoted," and in some cases the show, in 1876, did not come within 800 miles of the town cited. Never did the show use quotes from Kansas towns, but this was a practice followed by all traveling exhibitions. Why take chances on verification? The truth might hurt.

An excellent feature of the show is Little Willie Sells, who is one of the best bare-back riders we ever saw, al-

though he is a mere child. The Menagerie has been augmented by the addition of living Giraffe and a den of Sea Lions, and a curious animal called a Sea Tiger. We like the manner in which the managers do business--they are honorable and generous. Ministers, school-teachers, and educated people visit their show, as there is nothing said or to be seen that grates harshly upon the sensibilities of the most refined.--Mount Carmel (Ill.) *Signal*."

If the Great European brought a "living Giraffe" to Kansas, the animal was totally ignored by the press, and was certainly a well-kept secret.

A handout published in the *Southern*



Willie Sells at age 10 appeared in the 1876 performance of the Sells show.

*Kansas Advanced*, Cheyota, August 24, began with a statement beyond contradiction:

"The Big Show. At Chetopa on Saturday, Sep. 2nd. Ever since humanity was created there has been an innate fondness of amusement. People crave fun as much as food. The body and mind need relaxation. After months of fearful labor the farmer sees his crops harvested and his granaries filled with cereals, it is then that he begins to look around for some relaxation and amusement. There is no better chance to obtain food for moral relaxation than in the Menagerie. There the wonderful specimens of the all-wise Creator's handi-

work may be contemplated and studied. In this connection we would say that on Saturday, Sep. 2nd the Great European Show which is one of the largest in America will be in Chetopa. The following extract from an exchange will give the reader some idea of its merit."

After commenting on the parade in vague and general terms and reporting more than full houses at each performance, the "extract from an exchange" continued, "To say that the show is above the average, would be using exceedingly mild praise. We have no hesitancy in pronouncing the show first class, head and shoulders above the average. The different departments were ably managed, and the executive ability displayed by the managers was unexceptionable. The collection of animals is fully up to the standard, and the circus performance the best by far of any we have seen in many years. The riding struck us as being extra good. The performances of the trained animals were exceedingly entertaining. The riding dog, riding goat, and riding monkeys not only pleased the children, but were enjoyed by every one, old and young.--Baltimore *Daily Sun*."

Comment on the show from the Kansas press is nearly non-existent. The total comment from the *Humboldt Union* on the exhibitions of Monday, August 28, was, "It seems there were some monte men along with the European show. At Chanute they relieved three persons of \$200.00 A pretty good haul." And, "Monday witnessed the largest crowd that a circus ever drew to Humboldt."

"The *Chautauqua Journal*, Sedan, reporting on the exhibitions of Saturday, September 9, had little to say.

"Saturday proved a poor day for the swing and lemonade stands."

"The attendance at the show was very good, the number being not less than one thousand."

"The show at this place on Saturday was very good. Those who attended were generally well pleased."

It would be interesting to know why Saturday was a "poor day for the swing and lemonade stands," but the *Journal* gave no clue.

The *Walnut Valley Times*, Eldorado, in covering the exhibitions of Wednesday, September 13, was nearly loquacious compared to the other papers of Kansas.

The *Times* on September 1, reported, "Sells & Bros. circus will exhibit on the 13th inst. Our people have been so badly sold by circuses within the past few years that they will look with distrust on anything of that nature. The

agent of this one however, assures us that it is something different from Castello or Grady and that if the people will only come to town on the 13th they will be convinced of it. If you want to enjoy a show like you did 'back whar you come from' you must come to Eldorado on Wednesday the 13th inst."

On September 8, the *Times* reported that, "When the agent for Sells & Bros.' show passed through here last week he engaged three hundred pounds of fresh meat for the wild beasts."

According to the *Times*, after the show had come and gone, "An immense crowd was in town Wednesday to see the circus."

A handout in the *Clay County Dispatch*, Clay Center, for the performances of Tuesday, October 17, purportedly an exchange item from the Harrisburg (Pa.) *Examiner*, stated, "One of the rare things was the litter of lion cubs, which were taken from the cage and passed around among the audience, allowing the ladies and children to hold them in their arms."

The only comment made by the *Dispatch* after show day was, "One of the lions belonging to the Great European Menagerie died Tuesday night."

After the Sells brothers achieved financial security (c. 1882), they became honorable men who prided themselves on the moral standards maintained on their shows and pointed to the absence of gamblers, indecent displays and sharp practices in general, but on the way up every half dollar was important and questions of propriety were unasked. There are several accounts of gambling in the Kansas press in the fall of 1876.

The *Morris County Republican*, October 7, reported gambling on show day in Council Grove, Friday, September 29.

"J. H. Harper, residing down in the Kickapoo nation, who has seen a good many winters, and whose locks are silverying with age, had not yet learned the deep mystery of the celebrated and fascinating game called 'three card monte,' until the circus came to town last week. The dealer deftly tossed the bits of pasteboard around and allowed a bystander (who was afterwards seen feeding the wild animals in the menagerie) to turn up a corner of one of the cards, which he offered to bet any amount of Republican money, was not the 'keerd' it was. Harper thought he saw a veritable bonanza looming up before his eyes. How easy to beat this foolish fellow out of his money, of which he seemed to have 'heaps.' Harper 'went for' his wallet, took a second look at the cards, saw the turned up corner, and

put his money down on it. The gambler went him better. Harper raised the 'pot;' the gambler 'saw' him and thus the game went on until the 'pot' counted \$65 from Harper's wallet, and a like sum from the gambler's 'pile.' The card was turned up and lo! it was not the card, and the blackleg raked in Harper's greenbacks. Harper turned away a sadder but wiser man, and would for the balance of his days have reason to remember the European show \$65 worth, but



Lewis Sells was the manager of the Great European Zoological Institute in 1876.

for the timely aid of our efficient Sheriff, H. E. Richter, who, learning of Harper's loss, and rightly believing that he had been bagged into a swindling game, took steps to recover Harper's money, which he accomplished by arresting the 'three card monte man' and making him disgorge. It is safe to say Harper will not bet on monte any more, but he can give Sheriff Richter credit for the recovery of his \$65."

Once again the question comes to mind. If Harper had won would Sheriff Richter have made him give the money back to the monte man?

Sells Brothers' Great European Zoological Association and its eleven other parts came crawling into Topeka, Sunday, October 22, 1876, ending a march of 24 miles over dirt roads from St. Marys where the show had closed its season the day before.

The *Topeka Daily Commonwealth* commented, "The long line of horses

and mules looked worn and jaded, and even the wagons looked tired. The march was different from that of the cavalcade which makes the street gorgeous when the circus is on the road. Even the elephant seemed dejected and indifferent as she trudged along two blocks behind the line of wagons and cages.

"The truth is that the 'show' season is a comparatively short one, and the glory of the ring is as brief as that of the leaves on the trees. When the first cold weather comes, the ladies and gentlemen of the arena retire to private life, and the monkey and hyenas have their holes hunted for them."

The season had opened in April in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and the route had led through Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, and into Kansas, through dust and mud and rain, fording streams, and suffering from the heat of summer and the chill of spring and fall, and if the elephant seemed dejected it was with good reason, for the poor beast had walked all the way.

"Sell Bro's (sic) circus arrived in town yesterday, about noon," according to the *Topeka Daily Blade*. "The train reached from 10th street to 2nd, close order, without the elephant who was about two squares behind. The outfit looked pretty well worn out. They performed twice at St. Marys, on Saturday. The circus property was taken at once to the fair grounds where it will be quartered for the winter. The performers took rooms at the Tefft House, but will leave for their homes in a day or two."

Ten passenger agents representing 12 railroads engaged in a lively competition for the travel dollars of the show's personnel.

The search for "holes" for the monkey and hyenas brought the Sells brothers to Topeka on September 28, quite possibly at the urging of their long-time friend, Capt. W. D. Terry, proprietor of the *Topeka Omnibus Company*, who was instrumental in securing the fair grounds as winter quarters.

On October 3, the County Commission approved the following resolution:

"The agent for said Circus Company having personally applied to the Board of Commissioners for use of the Fair Grounds, the Board, in company with said Agent proceeded to visit the Fair Grounds, and it was agreed and ordered by the Board, that the said Circus Company have free use of said grounds on condition of keeping and leaving the same in as good repair as when entered upon, and provided such occupancy

shall not prevent the entry to such grounds of citizens, at any time, and the use of the track on said grounds for driving or trials of speed at such time as the Board may direct or permit. The said Company by its Agent and the County Board, mutually agreeing to said terms and conditions."

The key word is "free," there was no mention of money.

When the *Commonwealth's* reporter visited the fair grounds on the 24th of October, the tents had been erected to dry the canvas preparatory to storage. The 250 horses belonging to the show were jammed into the horse barns along with the elephant and the show's twelve cages of wild animals. The cross-shaped floral hall was being stripped of its shelves, platforms and tables to make a winter home for the wild animals. Plans were being made to cover the inside walls with sheathing and to insulate the building with saw dust. A practise ring was to be built in the area where the four wings intersected.

The Great European was the property of four brothers, Ephraim, Allen, Lewis and Peter Sells of Columbus, Ohio. They began their circus careers on a very frayed shoe string in 1872, and by stringent economy and the putting of every possible cent back into the business by 1876 had achieved a creditable position in the circus world. The "big time" lay just ahead. By the early 1880's the show would be clearing in excess of \$1,000 per day.

On October 10 the *Commonwealth* had jokingly reported, "The European Circus which is to winter here is styled in the advertisement 'a grand colossal moving apocalypse.' It is a long time since an 'apocalypse' has been in this neighborhood." "Apocalypse" proved to be an appropriate word, for Topeka was revelation to the Sells brothers who in the next 15 years invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in the city, and the brothers--particularly Allen--through their progressive ideas, became themselves a revelation to Topeka.

The floral hall was soon modified to fit the needs of the circus and life settled into a daily routine. Wagons and cages were stored and repaired in the north and south wings. In the east wing were the lions, leopard, wart hog and

In 1877 the Sells brothers called their show The Great Mastodon, Great European Zoological Association, Museum, Royal Colossum, Monster Zoological Institute, Asiatic Caravan and Gigantic Moral Double Circus. It was still a mud show.

zebra. The west wing was used as a dressing room for a few of the performers who spent the winter learning new tricks, polishing old ones, and breaking animals for the performances to come. The ring, made of stable litter, so nearly filled the crossing section of the building that it was necessary to pad the corners of the walls to protect performers.

There were no lights in the building, no music, no applause. Every day after school Willie Sells, the eleven year old adopted son of Allen Sells, reported to Harry Cadona for a lesson in bareback riding. Cadona was born to the circus and was an accomplished jack of all trades--and a harsh teacher. The whip he

used to direct the big ring horses worked as well on his student. When the season of '77 opened, Willie was again mentioned in the advertising as "The Best Boy Bareback Rider in the Country." Willie grew up to be one of the world's great performers.

Some of the people on the show were quickly integrated into the social life of Topeka. Louis Heck, bandmaster, and Prof. Getz, calliope player, assisted the German-Americans in a musical program at Turner Hall the day the show arrived in town. Heck continued with the Sells' band for a number of years but eventually left the show and settled in Topeka where he conducted orchestras for every major social event for years to come.

The *Blade* reported, November 20, that, "The Sells Bros. are having their cages painted in the upper room of the old armory building. Mr. Swanton is doing the fine work, assisted by Mr. Peter, both of whom are connected with the circus. If the cages are finished in the manner commended, they will be beauties. There are forty-one cages and wagons to be painted."

A highly trained mare strayed from the fair grounds on November 22, and was advertised in the papers with the offer of a reward. The *Blade* reported on December 6, that, "Sells Bros. have found their circus pony which strayed about two weeks ago. Mr. Waysman who lives about two miles east of the city took up the pony, and the same evening saw it advertised in the *Blade*. Mr. Sells says that Waysman kept the matter very quiet, not even letting his neighbor know of it, ostensibly to receive a greater reward. The county had been thoroughly scoured for the pony, by the circus men and only found to-day."

The winter brought hardship to some of the animals. Three new-born lion cubs died of the cold. The *Commonwealth*, January 4, reported, "The kangaroo belonging to the European circus and menagerie died yesterday. He cost originally \$250, had traveled extensively, and was much liked by all who knew him. The cause of his death is unknown."

Late in March the show received an additional elephant and three more camels. A new bandwagon constructed in Cincinnati at a claimed cost of \$3,000 arrived on March 30.

By the first of April circus people were arriving daily. The *Commonwealth* reported on April 3, that, "The talk now is all circus in the Tefft House counting room." Willis Cobb, a young trainer of dogs, monkeys and goats, and an excellent clown, who in later years was an outstanding circus press agent, was staying at the Tefft, as was Nick White, a German dialect clown. Speaking of White, the *Commonwealth* commented, "If he is as funny in the ring as he appears in person and ordinary conversation, he is a good one." Ephraim Sells was an infrequent visitor to Topeka, but all winter long his brothers, Allen Lewis and Peter, were guests at the Tefft, leaving now and then on circus business or to visit their homes in Columbus, Ohio.

Billboards, walls and windows were thoroughly posted with show bills by March 31, announcing the opening of the season with exhibitions in Topeka on Monday and Tuesday, April 16 and 17. On April 2, Peter Sells and his bill posters left Topeka to plaster the rest of the world with the news of the coming show--THE GREAT MASTODON.

"THE GREAT MASTODON" headed the show's newspaper advertising for the season of 1877. "A Stalking Giant! A Veritable Vulcan! Augmented and Re-fitted! It is now the Paragon of Amusement Enterprise! Line of March, from MAINE to MEXICO! Field of Triumph, the ENTIRE UNIVERSE! SEND WORD ALONG THE LINES!" Peter Sells and his advance crew certainly had their work cut out.

Adam Forepaugh, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, owner of a circus at least as large as Barnum's, correctly apprized the Sells brothers as coming competitors to his own show, and began a campaign against them that continued for several years. The *Blade* on April 3, ran an ad for THE GREAT MASTODON and in an adjoining column appeared a picture of Forepaugh in an ad declaiming "Await the Advent of the unapproachable

**AUCTION.**  
THE UNDERSIGNED WILL EXPOSE FOR SALE, AND  
SELL AT AUCTION, IN THE CITY OF  
**LOUISVILLE, KY.,**  
ON  
Thursday, the 21st Day of February Next,  
AT THE  
**EXPOSITION BUILDING,**  
THE ENTIRE PROPERTY KNOWN AS THE  
**MONTGOMERY QUEEN**  
**CIRCUS AND MENAGERIE**  
CONSISTING IN PART OF  
**60 Horses and Ponies, 8 Camels,**  
**1 ELK, 14 Cages of Animals,**  
ALL THE WAGONS, PROPERTIES, WARDROBE,  
TENTS, POLES, SEATS, ETC.  
Every lot will be sold for cash to the highest bidder,  
without reserve. Catalogues of the property can be had  
by application to THE COURIER CO., Buffalo, or at their  
branch office, 697 Broadway, New York.  
THE COURIER CO., Buffalo, N. Y.  
C. W. McCUNE, Treasurer.  
47-2t

The Sells brothers saw this advertisement in the *New York Clipper*. They attended the sale in Louisville, Kentucky on February 21, 1878 and came away owning equipment for a railroad circus.

ble FOREPAUGH SHOW. WILL EXHIBIT AT TOPEKA SOON." Forepaugh pointed out the vastness of his enterprise, boasting of his six elephants, his three "separate R. R. Trains," and featuring the only baby elephant ever born in captivity.

The *Kansas Farmer*, April 4, carried an ad for THE GREAT MASTODON at the bottom of which was listed the Sells brothers' route for the five towns following Topeka: April 18, Carbondale; April 19, Burlingame; April 20, Osage City; April 21, Melvern; April 23, Ottawa.

Forepaugh's agent was quick to note the Sells' route and in an ad in the *Commonwealth*, April 5, listed Forepaugh's route as being identical to that of THE GREAT MASTODON--Carbondale, Burlingame, Osage City, Melvern, Ottawa--day and date. In the middle of April the Forepaugh show was playing in North Carolina. The ads were intended as harassment, but it is doubtful that they in any way adversely affected the attendance at the Sells show. Had Forepaugh's agent claimed the day following the appearance of the Sells brothers, the result might have been disastrous, but claiming the same day could only increase the crowds at THE GREAT MASTODON. Forepaugh did play Ottawa, June 9, and Topeka, June 13. The same ploy was used in the Ottawa papers.

Early on Monday, April 16, THE GREAT MASTODON, The Great Europe-

an Zoological Association, Museum, Royal Colosseum and Circus moved off the fair grounds and pitched their tents near Kansas Avenue, just across the street from City Park, down by the river.

Saturday evening before the opening, the show's "Celebrated Military Band and Grand Opera Orchestra" under the direction of Professor Louis Heck serenaded the guests at the Tefft House. Capt. Terry received a special serenade in front of his house at 193 Kansas Avenue (under the city's original numbering system) between Sixth and Seventh streets. Heck was bandmaster for the Sells brothers until 1882 when he left the show and made his home in Topeka.

The parade on Monday was delayed by a storm which caused the performers to wear old costumes, but for Tuesday's parade the weather permitted the use of the show's sparkling news wardrobe.

The *Blade* described the parade as "one of the finest that ever graced this city. The beautiful cages showed to a splendid advantage. Everything about it looked fresh and vigorous. The horses and animals are in splendid condition."

Newspaper advertisements boasted: "The procession will be one of the finest ever seen in Topeka. The Great Golden Dragon Chariot! Crystal Car of Kronos! Ponderous Car of Juggernaut! Train of elephants robed in velvet and gold! Herd of Camels clad in Oriental housings! Steam 7 Octave Calliope! Cages, vans and dens trimmed with the most gorgeous banners, a sea of flags and streamers, uniformed drivers and a princely retinue. Surpassing in beauty, novelty and magnificence anything ever in Kansas."

The ads also mentioned that "The Entire Collection of Animals of J. M. French's Menagerie have Been Added to the already Extensive Menagerie which now Makes the Menagerie Department very Complete."

The first performance, a matinee on the 16th, played to a full house, and the evening show drew a good crowd. Heading the bill was the "Great Rivers Family," Richard Rivers, Madame Rivers, Miss Viola and Little Charlie Rivers, all talented bareback riders. Other headliners were Mlle. Ella Davenport, "The Elegant Horsewoman;" M. Austin and Mlle. Cora, trapeze artists; Willis Cobb's "Great Troupe of Educated Dogs, Goats and Monkeys," Master Willie Sells; Charles Ewers, "Champion Hurdle Rider of America;" Willie Gaylor, "The Prince of Contortionists;" Franklin and Kincade, "The Great Acrobats;" Fred Castle; Livingston Brothers; and "a host of minor performers who would

with any other show be considered stars." Clowns were John L. Davenport, "Shakesperian Jester;" Willis Cobb, "Folly's Plenipotentiary"; and Joel E. Davidson, "Grotesque Mimic." Cobb's educated animals constituted nearly half the show.

According to the *Blade*, April 18, in reference to the 17th, "The performance in the afternoon was very largely attended, but the threatening weather kept away a great many who wanted to attend. As it was, a storm broke upon the show towards the close, but they went ahead according to the programme, 'rain or shine.' In the evening the weather looked as though a set rain was impending and the chances for the show were rather dubious. Still there were fully a thousand people under the canvas." Adults, 50 cents; children under nine years, 25 cents.

Before leaving town the show sold three cages to J. A. Polley, proprietor of J. A. Polley and Company, carriage builders, located on east Fifth street adjacent to the Fifth Avenue hotel, who wanted to start a traveling menagerie. Polley had a lion and a tiger and was in the market for a hyena.

Boss hostler J. L. Trowbridge got the show started for Carbondale about four o'clock on the morning of April 18. Heavy rains put a terrible burden on the horses as they struggled down the mud roads. Water was high in the creeks and crossings were hazardous. With a mighty effort THE GREAT MASTODON kept up with its advertising playing Carbondale, Burlingame and Osage City as scheduled. At Osage City the show surrendered to the mud and was loaded on a special train over the Santa Fe to Lawrence. The Saturday date for Melvern was cancelled and Lawrence substituted with short advertising. The show resumed its advertised route at Ottawa, Monday, April 23.

It is due to the rail movement that we get our best idea of the size of the aggregation. The show arrived in Lawrence aboard sixty standard (30') railroad cars, moving in two sections.

"Some of the boys who went off with the circus returned yesterday," reported the *Commonwealth* on April 20. "The hardships of the business as seen between here and Carbondale were sufficient."

The Great Mastodon played Paola, Tuesday, April 24, and La Cygne the following day. The *La Cygne Weekly Journal*, April 28, reported that, "The circus had the effect of keeping nearly all the scholars from going to school on Wednesday morning, only two pupils being present in one department and a few straggling youths appearing

in the three other rooms. The teachers felt gloomy and dismissed their charges for the day."

The show was well received by the town and was described as "one of the best shows that ever appeared under tents in La Cygne. There were but very few empty seats at either the afternoon or evening performances."

In the middle of June the show was still struggling through heavy mud. Northeast Kansas had nearly constant rain for the week preceding the Great European's exhibitions in Hiawatha, Wednesday, June 13. The *Kansas Herald*

WILL EXHIBIT AT  
**DU QUOIN, ILL.**  
—ON—  
**TUESDAY, SEPT. 4,**  
A FIELD DAY OF AMUSEMENT!  
—GREAT—  
  
**European Zoological Association!**  
**MUSEUM, ROYAL COLLOSSEUM,**  
**Aquarium and Gigantic Double Circus!**  
**SELLS BROS., Managers.**  
**THE STANDARD SHOW OF AMERICA!**  
Permitting its Appearances. Time tried in the Crucible of Public Opinion. Matchless in Originality. A Unique Collection of Attractions. The Outgrowth of Unusual Wealth. The Acme of Excellence.  
**None Equal It!**  
Itself its only Parallel. Strictly First-Class in all its Details. A Cornucopia of Wonders. Features its Spectacular. More Animals and Wild Beasts. More Marvels in the Museum. More Performers in the Ring. More Novelty, and Interest, and Uniqueness. ADOPT THE FINEST GUTTET OF ANY SHOW IN AMERICA. THE ONLY.  
**HIPPOPOTAMUS**

Newspaper ad used by the European Zoological Institute in 1877. Circus World Museum collection.

reported that, "Despite mud and rain, old men and women, the athlete and cripple, the invalid wife, the deaf, dumb and blind, crowded the pavements to witness the parade of Sells Brother's grand, gorgeous, glitter of golden glamor."

The editor offered the opinion that "the drouth, this season will be excessively muddy and damp."

"The Sells show was a pretty fair thing," the *Herald* stated, June 21, "The ring performances were better than usual, for a country performance. On ac-

count of the mud, they were compelled to ship by rail to Falls City [Nebraska], from White Cloud [Kansas], many of their heavier guns, and we were thus deprived of all. The managers of the concern, as well as the employees and actors, all appear to be gentlemen. We never saw less vulgarity, and rowdyism exhibited at any show."

Topeka was fortunate to have had the circus winter on the fair grounds. The long term gain for the city is incalculable. Allen, Lewis and Peter Sells saw Topeka as a progressive place blessed with certain growth, and as they accumulated profits in the coming years they invested heavily in Topeka.

The short term gain for Topeka was an impressive \$22,000 cash (*Blade*, April 18) spent with local merchants. All Topeka, children and adults, hoped, for different reasons, for the return of the show in the fall, but the Great European spent the winter of 1877-8 in Columbus, Ohio.

## 1878

After the season of 1877, the prospering Sells brothers bought Montgomery Queen's circus in the spring of 1878 went forth in style. The purchase of the Queen show gave the brothers a surplus of animals and equipment which they organized into a wagon show under the joint management of Lewis Sells and James Anderson.

The relationship of Anderson to the Sells brothers is a mystery to the author. Perhaps Anderson was a genuine partner, or perhaps merely an employee. In the season of 1877 Anderson was on the Great European but was late in joining the show due to the imminent death of Mrs. Hawkes. The identity of Mrs Hawkes is uncertain, but she may have been the mother-in-law of Anderson. Mrs. Hawkes died April 14, in Columbus, Ohio, and Anderson came on sometime after the Topeka opening.

Anderson & Company's Great Inter-Continental Circus and Monster World's Menagerie--the New and Vast Titan of the Present Tenting Season--began the season of 1878 in April, opening in Columbus, Ohio. The show worked its way through Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, and by the end of August was exhibiting in Kansas.

The show played--among others--these Kansas towns: August 22, White Cloud; August 23, Troy; August 24, Kennekuk (Abandoned 1900); August 26, Holton; August 27, Valley Falls; August 28, Oskaloosa; August 29, Tonganoxie; August 31, Olathe; September 2, Paola; September 3, La Cygne; September 4, Pleasanton; September 11, Elk City; September 12, Sedan; Sep-

tember 13, Howard City; October 3, Americus; October 8, Osage City; October 9, Burlingame; October 10, Carbondale; October 11, Topeka winter quarters.

Advertising for the show was couched in vague terms and the names of any performers appeared only in the *La Cygne Weekly Journal*, August 24. mentioned were "Signor Alberti, the most daring, thrilling and accomplished bare-back somersault equestrian in the known world. Mr. Charles Ewers, the justly celebrated champion hurdle, two and four horse bare-back rider in America." The rest of the cast was lumped into "Over One Hundred Principal Performers," as were Alberti and Ewers in every town except *La Cygne*.

More space was given to the menagerie than any other feature of the show. "A MONSTER MENAGERIE! 34 CAGES OF ANIMALS! EVERY MAJESTIC ANIMAL BY ADAM NAMED."

The "Noah-like" menagerie was a "Triumphal train of Captive Jungle Terrors! The Mammoth and Minor Animals, the Ferocity and Docility, the Feline Beauty and Reptilian Repulsiveness, the Terror and Tractibility, the Ravenous and Ruminating. Savage Nature in all her quadrupedal and creeping forms, the Incarnate lessons of every Element and Clime. Living Library in Landscape Pairs. Open for all to study with delight. A Two-Horned Black India Rhinoceros. Living African Horned Horse. Brazilian Tapir, South American Oquadad and its cubs. Yak of Tartary, Sea Lions, Australian Kangaroos and Asiatic Addix among its specialties." All ads carried a cut of a giraffe, but there is never a mention of a giraffe in the text of advertisements, handouts or reviews.

"Performing Elephants, Performing Lions, Performing Tigers, Performing Hyenas, Riding Dogs, Goats and Monkeys. Performing Ponies, Trick Chargers, Clown Mules, Ape actors and other astonishing Brute Scholars."

The street parade, which the show said was "Free," was billed as a "monster Caravan of richly caparisoned Elephants, Dromedaries, Camels, Arabian Steeds, Ornate Chariots and Cages, Army of Gorgeously Accoutered and Panoplied Retainers, and Glittering Decorations passing before the dazzled eye like a dream of the Orient."

Prominent in the advertising was a cut of the "\$25,000 STEAM PIANO. The only Genuine Steam Piano ever in this country, though often advertised. The Largest, Costliest and Loudest Toned Instrument ever manufactured." The *Chautauqua Journal*, Sedan, Septem-

ber 13, reported that "the grand Steam Piano was the novel attraction of the day."

In none of the Kansas towns was there reports of gambling and sharp practices. Apparently every one could agree with the *Weekly Chief*, August 29, reporting on the exhibitions at Troy, Thursday, August 22 that "They were not followed by a hordes of swindlers, confidence men, gamblers,

them. Considering the hard day's work they had of it, in the hottest day of the year, this is remarkable. In short, if nothing worse than Anderson's Circus ever invades a town, the community will not seriously suffer from it."

The show was plagued by extremely hot weather for many of the Kansas dates, and the *Chief* thought that, "Considering the great exertion required by circus performers, great allowance ought to be made from them, when they are cooped up in a pen with mercury boiling up to one hundred." The "pen" had a claimed seating capacity of 6,000.

At *La Cygne*, Tuesday, September 3, the heat continued and the *Journal* commented: "Despite the uncomfortably warm weather of Tuesday Anderson & Co's circus and menagerie succeeded in drawing large afternoon and evening audiences in this city. The exhibition was as good as the average entertainments of its class." The *Journal* also noted that, "A snake 7 1/2 feet long, belonging to Anderson & Co's circus, succumbed to the inevitable in this city Tuesday evening, and shuffled off its reptile coil." The season ended Thursday, October 10, at Carbondale, 12 miles south of Topeka. Proceeding in a leisurely fashion the show arrived in Topeka at noon, October 11.

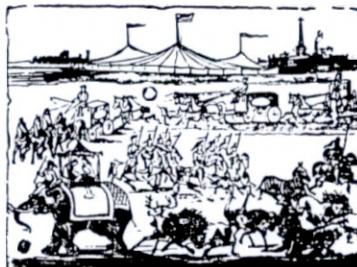
All of the wagons turned in at the fair grounds except for the band chariot which continued on to the Tefft House at Seventh and Kansas. A guest at the Tefft was the famous comedian John Dillon who was appearing at the Opera House as Adonis Evergreen in a society comedy titled "My Dreadful Dad." The band serenaded Dillon with three selections which the actor graciously acknowledged. Capt. W. D. Terry led the crowd in three cheers for Anderson and the Sells brothers. The band then rendered "Home Sweet Home" which in circus tradition marked the final note of the season.

The show that moved on to the fair grounds was large for a "mud" show, as overland shows were called, but not as big as the Great European of two years ago. Anderson employed about 170 men, used 146 horses and carried 20 dens of wild animals and an uncounted number of baggage wagons. The county commissioners entered into the following agreement with Anderson and Lewis Sells on October 8, permitting the circus to use the fair grounds without charge. From the *Journal of the Board of County Commissioners of Shawnee County*, 1878, Page 387.

"Gentlemen:

"We, the undersigned make to you the following request and proposition--

**THE EVENT OF THE AGE**  
**THE LARGEST & BEST SHOW**  
 ON THE AMERICAN CONTINENT.  
**ENDORSED BY THE PRESS, CLERGY & PUBLIC,**  
 AND SUSTAINED BY THE MASSES.  
**WILL EXHIBIT AT LA CYGNE**  
 —ON—  
**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3.**



**ANDERSON & CO.'S**  
**Master World's Menagerie,**  
 MUSEUM, AVIARY, CARAVAN.  
**COLLOSEUM AND EQUESTRIAN EXPOSITION.**  
**GIGANTIC IN MAGNITUDE! COLOSSAL IN CONCEPTION!**  
**THE GRAND FIELD SHOW OF AMERICA.**

**GREAT DOUBLE CIRCUS**  
traveling exclusively by land, 1,000 men and horses in its transports, over the public highway! Every feature positively produced. Two eight center pole tents, capable of seating 6,000 persons. Water-proof canvas. A deluge of glittering attractions."

**In Magnitude and Size, in Perfection, and In Sterling Excellence It stands Alone and Without an Equal.**

**Animal and Arenic Avalanche! A Noah-like Menagerie of Unchallenged Champions.**

After going on rails in 1878 the Sells wagon show equipment was placed on a second unit under the direction of James P. Anderson, their former contracting agent. This newspaper ad was used for the Anderson date in *La Cygne*, Kansas late in the season. Kansas State Historical Society collection.

thieves and other hangers-on, that generally come along with a circus. They had a little prize ticket arrangement, but it was in a way that no one could lose more than a small amount, if he saw proper to invest. We have heard of no thefts, and there were no drunken men belonging to the show. All connected with it seemed to be remarkably good-humored and gentlemanly. Indeed, an oath was rarely heard from any of

"1st We ask the privilege of the Fair Grounds and such buildings as are necessary thereon for the winter of 1878 and 1879 for the purpose of wintering Anderson and Company's Circus and Menagerie.

"2nd In case you should grant the privilege of said grounds, and such buildings as are necessary thereon we propose and agree.

"I To use the same with reasonable care, and to allow no waste or damage to said premises through our negligence.

"II To neither permit any stock to run at large on pasture on said grounds.

"III To clean up all rubbish, waste feed and manure and remove the same from the premises in the spring at such time as we may quit said premises.

"IV To quit and deliver up said premises in the Spring in as good condition and repair as the same are when we commence to occupy the same, reasonable wear and tear excepted.

"V To pay all damage the premises may suffer through our negligence or bad usage during the occupancy by us.

"VI That the County Commissioners have reserved the right to use the Race Track and such buildings as are not in use by us in wintering said Circus and Menagerie.

"Witness our hands this (Blank) day of September 1878.

Signed Lewis Sells  
James Anderson

"The proposition and request of Messrs Lewis Sells and James Anderson, for the use of the Fair Grounds for wintering their circus and menagerie having been duly considered on motion he said request is granted, the propositions embodied therein accepted, and the following endorsement made on said written request and proposition which is filed with the papers of this day's proceedings, viz

"The written proposition is accepted by the Board of County Commissioners of Shawnee County, this 8th day of October 1878.

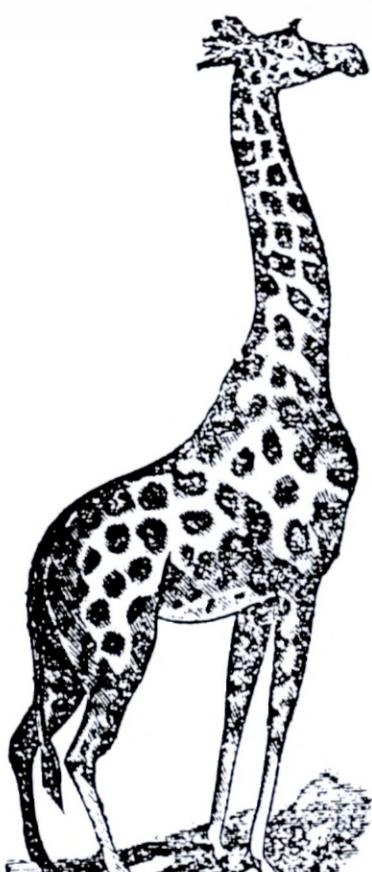
Signed D. Brockway  
Chairman."

The following report appeared in the Topeka *Daily Commonwealth* on Friday, October 11.

"A Presentation.

"Wednesday night when the Anderson and Sells circus was at Burlingame, at the conclusion of the entertainment the clown requested that the two proprietors of the Great-Transcontinental Circus, Mr. James Anderson and Louis (sic) Sells, step into the ring. His request was complied with. He then requested that all the actors and employees of the

**WILL EXHIBIT**  
AT  
**Valley Falls, Kas!**  
ON  
**TUESDAY AUG. 27 '78**  
**ANDERSON & CO'S**



Great Inter-Continental  
**CIRCUS!**  
—AND—  
**MONSTER WORLD'S MENAGERIE!**  
THE NEW AND  
**VAST TITAN of the PRESENT**  
TENTING SEASON.

It is doubtful that Anderson had a giraffe as shown in this 1878 ad. Kansas State Historical Society collection.

circus also step into the ring. The clown then, in a very pretty speech, presented Mr. Anderson with an elegant diamond pin, and Mr. Sells with a massive fold-headed cane.

"It was a surprise to the recipients of the gifts, and shows how they are esteemed by their employees."

An interesting event occurred on the night of October 14, at the Opera House in Topeka.

"During the rendition of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,' and between the second and third acts last night," the *Commonwealth* reported, "Mr. George S. Cole, Assistant Manager of the Anderson Show appeared on the stage and asked that if Mr. Lewis Sells was in the audience, he would appear on the stage. In response to the call Mr. Sells stepped upon the stage, hat in hand, and advanced toward the gentleman, his inherent modesty being exhibited so far as to be noticeable by his friends in front of the stage."

After an appropriate speech, Cole presented his employer, on behalf of the show's department heads, a beautiful gold-headed cane.

The *Commonwealth* described the cane as being made of "rosewood, surmounted by a gold head, octagonal in shape, and bearing devices of an elephant on his native heath, a lion on his haunches, a hippopotamus in a jungle and an equestrienne in the ring. On the top of the cane is a representation of an elk, the edges beautifully and appropriately carved. The words 'Lewis Sells, Columbus, Ohio,' are neatly engraved on the top."

"In reply to this Mr. Sells was characteristic--brief and to the point. He said, 'I accept this present--this beautiful present, with many thanks.'"

The cane cost \$125.

The same account, word for word in its essentials, appeared in the Topeka *Daily Blade*, October 15. The circus press agent had scored again.

Forty of the circus men stayed on through the winter to recondition the show for the coming season. The rest went to their homes scattered all over the country. George Cole opened a cigar counter in the Tefft House and was joined by his wife and son, Bertie.

Once again wild animals inhabited the floral hall. The show's one elephant got loose on October 15 and walked through the wall of the building. At the cook house she picked up a box of bread, carried it to a remote corner of the fair grounds and ate it all.

#### 1879

The winter progressed smoothly at the fair grounds. The press was not as inquisitive as it had been in the winter of 1876-7 when the Great European stayed in Topeka. Despite the neglect of the Topeka papers important changes were being made in the Anderson show. Bigger and better, of course, but the great news was the switch from "mud" show to the railroad.

Journalism by 1879 had progressed to the point where the papers reported in great detail what the Prince of Wales had for breakfast, but neglected the events in their own backyards. Other than reporting that the show left town on the Kansas Pacific on Thursday, April 17, the papers answered none of the questions raised. How many cars? What kinds of cars? How many flats? How many stocks? How many sleepers? And what was the color scheme?

Posters blossomed all over town on April Fool's Day announcing two days of exhibiting in Topeka, Tuesday and Wednesday, April 15 and 16, of Anderson & Company's Monster European Asiatic, African, American, Arctic and Antarctic World's Menagerie and Champion Challenge Circus.

An advertisement in the Topeka *Colored Citizen*, April 5, told as modestly as possible the simple facts of Anderson & Company's coming presentation.

"The Mightiest Confederation of Living Lessons and Moral and Mirthful Amusement Earth Has Ever Known. The Largest and Rarest Wild Beast Concentration Since the Deluge. 500 Ravening Royal Monsters and 500 Magnificent Exotic Beasts and Birds. Every Oriental Beast by Adam Named."

"THE ONLY ANTIPODAL AUDUBON AVIARY.

"The only Arctic Aquarium.

"THE ONLY ANNEX OF PRODIGOUS HUMAN CONTRADICTIONS."

The ad in the *Citizen*, in speaking of the parade, admitted, "All Other Pagents Poverty Beside This Massive Moving Miracle of Golden Glory." The parade featured "Appollo's Stupendous Steam Chariot Piano Whose Melodious Music May Be Heard for Miles." The whole procession was likened to "A veritable living avalanche."

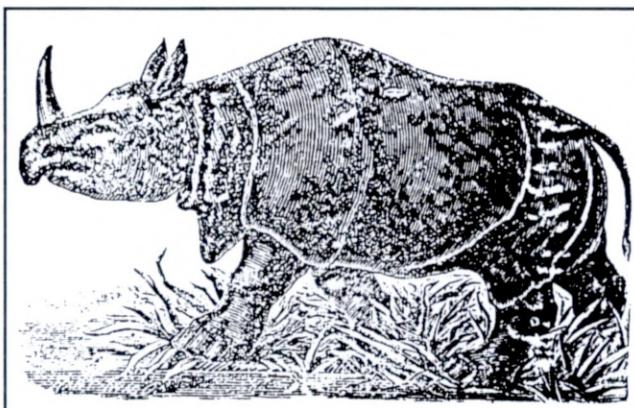
The performance, too, was hinted to be glorious. And all for only 50 cents, adults; children under nine years, half price. The city council, out of gratitude, waived the license fee.

After billing Topeka the advance crew under George Castello moved, April 1, to alert Junction City, for April 17; Ellsworth, April 18; and Hayes City, April 19.

"Notwithstanding the inclemency of the weather," the *Blade* reported, April 15, "the streets were crowded with people at an early hour, anxious to see the parade. At 12 o'clock the procession filed down Kansas Avenue to their show ground adjoining the City Park headed by their fine band wagon, drawn by eight white horses, and followed at the rear with the calliope, playing several familiar airs."

The *Commonwealth* in reporting on the exhibitions of the 15th stated, "Everything about the establishment was in ship shape and looked spick and span; and notwithstanding the lowering clouds, the wet ground and the serious promise of another heavy rain, there was a fair audience gathered at both the afternoon and evening performances."

The *Commonwealth* reporter thought the tumbling "was the best that has probably ever been seen in this city; while the trapeze performance of the world-famed Alfredo and wife, drew forth the admiration of the audience, while the danger of the feats they accomplished stopped the breath."



The Sells brothers liked this rhinoceros drawing, it was used in both the Anderson and Sells' newspaper ads in 1878.

After the regular performance a minstrel show headed by McIntyre and Heath captivated those of the audience who were willing to pay a little extra for a lot more entertainment.

George Cole closed the evening with a drawing, distributing silver spoons, napkin rings, butter knives, goblets, sugar bowls and cream pitchers. The big prize was an elegant water urn won by Hank Lindsey who promptly sold it back to Cole for \$25.

The 16th was a re-run of the day before with a parade in the morning and well-attended performances in the afternoon and evening. Early in the morning of Thursday, April 17, the show was on its way to Junction City and the wintering of 1878-9 was nothing more than a memory.

Among the dates played in the spring of 1879 were the following: April 17, Junction City; April 18, Ellsworth; April 19, Hays; April 28, Russell; April 29, Saline; April 30, Minneapolis; May 1, Abilene; May 3, Clay Center; May 6, Wamego; May 9, Centralia; May 10, Seneca; May 12, Sabetha;

May 13, Hiawatha; May 14, Falls City, NE; May 21, Steele City; May 22, Marysville; May 23, Frankfort; May 24, Waterville; May 26, Washington; May 29, Jewell Center; May 30, Beloit; May 31, Cawker City; June 2, Osborne; June 3, Bull's City; June 4, Stockton; June 5, Kirwin.

The first road date of the season, Junction City, April 17, a jump of 72 miles from Topeka on the Kansas Pacific, was supported by "large audiences in attendance both day and evening," according to the *Union*, "and the whole show gave general satisfaction."

The performance included one of the oldest laugh makers in American circus history--the "drunk" who wanders into the ring intent on joining the act in progress. In Ellsworth, Friday, April 18, "Policeman Davis got five dollars from the circus company for playing his part so well," reported the *Reporter*. "When he arrests a seemingly drunk actor again it will probably be in the sweet by and by.

Eh, Davis?" The "drunk" invariably turned out to be the star of the act, but there is no indication of the nature of the act at Ellsworth.

Ellsworth, 84 miles west of Junction City on the Kansas Pacific, saw the first use of a bit of doggerel in a handout that was used extensively in Kansas.

"What means this uproar in the town?

The shooting, jostling, running?

Tell Mary and her little lamb

The Elephants are coming!

"Which is the way we are inspired to poetically sing the coming to Ellsworth on Friday, April 18th, of the first and greatest tent show of the season, to give the most gorgeous and sensational free street parade in the morning ever seen in this latitude, and afternoon and evening exhibitions of rare wild beasts, birds, reptiles and marine wonders, and a greater number of thrilling, novel and ludicrous equestrian and gymnastic feats and animal acts and antics, under its enormous spread of separate canvases than a baker's dozen of the hertofore so-called big shows could combined produce."

The handout continued in the *Reporter* for at least three times the space quoted above, but like the show's newspaper advertisements and other hand-

outs, no performers were mentioned by name.

After the show had come and gone the *Reporter* reported, April 24, that "After the street show [parade], a free rope walk was witnessed by a large crowd of people who had by this time come in from the country and neighboring towns.

"The circus performance was good; there is no denying that some feats were wonderfully performed and was greeted with loud applause. All were satisfied with the circus as was evinced by the return of a large number of the afternoon audience to the evening performance. The wardrobe was the most elegant we ever saw. The concert was good, and the silverware given away, was disposed of in a fair and square manner, satisfactory to all. The managers are gentlemen."

At Hays City, Saturday, April 19, the *Ellis County Star* reported that, "Two cars loaded with the fun loving ladies and gentlemen of Ellis (13 miles west of Hays) were in the city Saturday taking in the sights and enjoying the sports of the saw dust ring." The *Star* described the act of Dorr and Son as "par excellence" but offered no description.

After the exhibition at Hays, Anderson & Company disappeared from Kansas newspapers for the following week. In later years shows would make a Sunday run from western Kansas to Denver (Hays to Denver, 350 miles) or other Colorado points or even to Cheyenne, an additional 106 miles.

On Monday, April 28, the show was back in Kansas, exhibiting at Russell, 377 miles from Denver on the Kansas Pacific. The Russell date was memorable only for the first mention of sharp practices. The *Record* stated, May 1, that, "The man with the trick money boxes came to grief last Monday, and only escaped severe punishment by refunding the money dishonorably obtained, and paying the costs of the prosecution."

The *Abilene Gazette* in reporting the exhibitions of Thursday, May 1, described the show as "a good one, and largely attended at Abilene."

After the Sells brothers achieved financial security in the early 1880's,

they decried the dishonesty, gambling and out-right thievery of lesser showmen, especially the devious methods of their adopted nephew, Willie Sells, but in 1879 the pursuit of the dollar preceded all else.

The *Gazette* reported that, "The ticket agent of Anderson & Co's show, for not giving back to a boy the necessary change for a V, after deducting the price of a ticket, was arrested and compelled

and in the arena witness the seeming impossibilities which are there accomplished by humanity. And with all the grumble and complaint, people generally think this way; and when occasion offers, they act accordingly.

"Last Tuesday was not much of an exception. Anderson & Co's great Menagerie and Circus was billed for Wamego, and promptly made their debut. They

came in on their special trains from the west, and soon tents were pitched on the eastern outskirts of town. About ten o'clock was the procession, or 'grand entre,' as they call it, consisting of footmen, equestrians, the animal kingdom and feathery world in adorned cages, elephants, camels, midget quadrupeds, &c., followed by the calliope, or steam piano. The procession was quite extended and was as fine a display of curiosities, magnificence, and glittering grandeur as we have witnessed in many a day.

"The first, next, was the free tight rope ascension by Prof. Codoll. This was witnessed by every body, even by the most fastidious who thought it wicked to look at a circus (a few such still infest the earth).

"As usual our city was pretty full of people, a few of whom were also pretty full, and were furnished a corner in the cooler, but we must confess that for circus day the town was extremely orderly. Our merchants reaped a good harvest of trade.

"There were the ordinary chuck lucks, confidence gentlemen, cheap John's, &c., and they had the usual success among those who did not heed the warnings of the *Tribune* of last week.

"There was but one annex to the main show. In this was the lilliputian queen--Miss Shay--31 inches tall; the Circassian queen with the full blown dandelion head; the educated pig--only 8 weeks old; Edison's Phonograph; 'Punch and Judy,' and the redoubtable prestidigitator.

"The menagerie was of the usual order, comprising birds and beasts of varied profusion.

<img alt="A detailed historical advertisement for the Champion Challenge Circus from 1879. The top banner reads '1879---INAUGURATION OF THE CAMPAIGN OF---1879.' Below it, 'AT TOPKA' is written above 'Tuesday &amp; Wednesday, April 15th &amp; 16th'. The main title 'CHAMPION CHALLENGE CIRCUS!' is in large, bold letters. Below the title, it says 'ANDERSON &amp; CO.'S Menagerie European, Asiatic, African, American, Arctic and Antarctic World's Menagerie and Great'. A circular logo on the left features a lion and a unicorn. The text 'The Largest &amp; Rarest Wild Beast Concentration SINCE THE DELUGE.' is followed by '500 RAVENING ROYAL MONSTERS AND MAGNIFICENT EXOTIC BEASTS AND BIRDS.' including 'Ferocious Lions from every part of the Globe, including Monster Elephants, Arabian Camels, Royal Bengal Tigers, Majestic Lions, Lions, Snarling Hyenas, Ibex, Rhinos, Leopards, Tigers, Gaengas, And in fact Every Oriental Beast by Adam Named.' To the right, a small illustration shows a person on a horse performing a trick. The text 'A Complete Zoological Exhibit of all the Zones' and 'Fail not to see this Mammoth Exhibition!' is followed by 'Complete in Every Department!' with a small note 'For, I am your word for it, you will never require it, it is'. Below this, a large illustration shows a grand circus scene with various animals and performers. The text 'A MIX CONTINENT GRAND CIRCUS CIRCLE!' is above the illustration. To the left, it says 'IN THE LARGEST, CHICKEST, BEST FRAYED, AND MOST BRILLIANTLY ILLUMINATED AND REPRODUCED SEPARATE CAVAN COLUMNS EVER DISPLAYED.' and 'A SIX CONTINENT SEPARATE AREA OF ANIMAL ACTS!' including 'The Largest Elephants and Most Massive, Burly, Brawny, Athlete, Aerobic, Climbing, Jumping, Running, Diving, Swimming, and Musical, Presenting an Infinitely Varied Program of Performances, the like of which is incomparably pre-eminent. AN AMAZING!' The bottom text 'A CONGRESS OF TENTS, CHARIOT PLATOON, OPOLLO'S STUPENDOUS STREAK, CHARIOT PLATOON, WHERE Midwives Major may be found for miles.' and 'A Veritable Living Avalanche!' is visible. The bottom right corner reads 'The Majestic Monarch of the Road and Rail.'</div>

This newspaper ad announced the opening dates of the Anderson & Co. 1879 season. Kansas State Historical Society collection.

to make restitution. He did so reluctantly."

The best description we have of Anderson & Company is the following story from the Wamego *Tribune*, May 13, regarding the exhibition of Tuesday, May 6:

## "CIRCUS DAY

"Like all other holidays, the Circus is one of great enjoyment, and if there is anything in God's world that commands more universal patronage and cussin' by the same fellows and at the same time than does that awful drain of the country--the circus-- we should like you to name it. Like all other fleeting pleasures, it's mighty nice while it lasts, but after you have spent your last penny, you feel like a sheep killing dog, and hate yourself for not staying at home. But why is it so? There is probably no amusement more varied, pleasing and instructively entertaining, than to visit the menagerie and view earth's wonders,

"Two performances were given in the circus ring--afternoon and night--and each was well patronized; the immense tent--320 x 370 feet, being well filled; a large percent of whom remained for the concert, which we will take time right here to remark, was the best and most side-splitting concert we ever witnessed accompanying a circus performance.

"The bare back riding by Mr. Holland was equal to John [James] Robinson or nearly so as can be, and this is saying enough. The performance on the horizontal bar and on the trapeze by the handsome lady acrobat was indeed wonderful; in fact ahead of anything we ever before witnessed. The Dorr Brothers in their agility eclipse anything we ever saw in that line. The lady equestrian performed in an especially admirable manner. Indeed to trace the entire performance through a long and varied programme of feats would prove tedious; but we do not hesitate to give the managers the benefit of our opinion, that as a whole, this circus is excellent in every feature; and in many, novel and superior to the ordinary performances.

"In bulk the thing is quite immense, their tents covering many acres, and appearing like a fair city. There is a full compliment of elegant horses and vehicles, and about 190 men in all. The clowns, three or four in number--are quaint and good; especially Joe Davis and Billy Porter--the latter a perfect clown, and the former a complete success in the mimic comedian role. Mr. G. S. Cole manages the concert, and to his good judgment the managers are indebted for the success which crowns that feature.

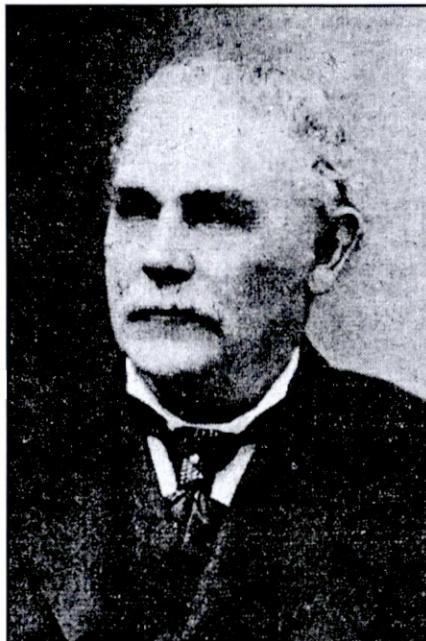
"Lew Sells and Mr. Anderson are the managers, and, we believe, the proprietors. They are excellent gentlemen, without a speck of that coarse manner sometimes observed among show managers. They are experienced in their profession, polite and affable, and seem, to conduct every department of their immense affairs like clock work, and on strict business principles. On the whole Anderson & Co's show is a good one and we heartily commend it."

For the Centraillia date, Friday, May 9, the show erected a bulletin board 160 feet long. There is no other report for the date.

The gamblers were back in the news at Seneca, Saturday, May 10. "The side show with Anderson's circus," according to the *Courier*, May 16, "runs a little game with dice that gets away with the boys; and 'cappers' are put to work with good effect. The thing was

allowed to run in the forenoon, City Attorney Scoville declaring it not illegal; but at night Sheriff Martin took the fellows in hand, and put a stop to their business."

On a different page the *Courier* reported that, "Anderson & Co's show drew an immense crowd on Saturday. The show is a good one for Kansas, but not nearly so large as advertised. The minstrel attachment, however, is the best one that ever visited Seneca, and their afternoon performance is hard to beat. There is a big gang of sharpers with the show, but they did not do well at Seneca. Our folks were too smart to bite at their many little games."



James P. Anderson was 42 years of age in 1879, his last year of association with the Sells brothers.

Another gambling arrangement, one which failed to incur the wrath of the *Courier*, was reported as follows:

"Among the inducements to buy a minstrel ticket at Anderson's circus is offered a lot of prizes in silverware--the principal prize being a water pitcher, which the manager pays the winner \$25 for if preferred. S. H. Fitzwater was the lucky one to draw the prize at Seneca, and sensibly took the \$25 instead. 'Babe' was born lucky."

"There were several darkies employed as help with Anderson's circus." This brief comment in the *Courier*, May 16, 1879, is the earliest reference found concerning blacks traveling with a circus in Kansas.

There is a touch of sadness in the *Courier's* comment that, "The circus

bills are all torn down, and the town looks dull."

Anderson and Company surprised the hotel and livery men of Sabetha by arriving on Sunday morning for the exhibitions of Monday, May 12. Sunday moves were standard procedure, but the *Nemaha County Republican*, reflecting the intense rivalry between the villages, explained the early arrival with the comment, "They object to staying in a small town over Sunday when they can help it, and accordingly left Seneca as early as possible."

The *Republican* reported that, "The circus and menagerie made a grand street display last Monday morning, and in the afternoon gave a tolerably fair performance to an audience of 2000 people. In the evening the crowd was reduced, and so was the show, they both being very thin. The usual number of gamblers and swindlers were with the show, who found the usual number of dupes who tried to beat another man's game, and of course got beat. Sheriff Martin was here in the evening and compelled one of the sharpers to refund several dollars to a boy. Several older boys (aged 35 to 60) didn't get their money back, but have probably learned several dollars worth."

In another column the *Republican* stated, "One of our shrewdest business men invested ten dollars in that little game in which three cards are used, one being turned up at the corner. He walked away minus his ten dollars, and sadder, and, it is to be hoped, a wiser man.

"Not a drunken man was to be seen on our street the day of the show."

The show fared poorly in the columns of the Hiawatha *Kansas Herald* regarding the performances of Tuesday, May 13. "Anderson & Co's moving monster of marvels only lacked the marvels and the marvelous, and the monster; the rest was on hand in the great pay-villain. We saw it. But la! didn't they get rained on? When the show was about half out, a severe hail and rain storm came down upon the whole shebang."

The Hiawatha *Dispatch*, May 13, had considerable to say about the show.

"The biggest thing at the circus was the storm. The elephant was small in comparison with it; and, in the midst of the surging elements with the roaring of the lions, the grinning of the hyenas, and the barking of the monkeys, when the keeper hit the elephant behind the ear and made him roar like a clap of thunder, the united screams of the ladies combined to make a performance well worth the money."



tions of Saturday, May 31, made a statement regarding the menagerie that was not confirmed by any other newspaper. "Anderson's Circus last Saturday showed at this place under many difficulties. It was the day after the hurricane, and the streets were extremely muddy and sloppy. The double acts and barrel feats, together with the trained dogs, were the best features in the show. The menagerie was small, some of the cages being entirely empty. As regards to acrobatic display, however, we are of the opinion that it was the best that has visited this part of the state."

On Monday, June 2, the show played Osborne City. "Anderson & Co's great combination of world wonders exhibited itself in this city on Monday, to an immense throng of people. It probably attracted the largest crowd ever assembled in Osborne City on any occasion,

either religious or secular," reported the *Osborne County Farmer*, June 5.

"Yes, the show has come and gone. It took with it a good deal of loose change that formerly belonged in the community, but left behind many smiling faces, many crumbs of dearly bought wisdom, and enough incidents to keep the country in talking timber for a whole week. As is always the case with traveling shows, there were numerous hangers-on whose mission is to beat the fool-killer by picking up greenhorns and teaching them a little practical wisdom before that individual comes around. We have heard of a number of persons who invested from five to forty-five dollars in the prize package business, and now count their wealth about that much less than formerly.

"The show was probably as good a

one as can afford to travel as far west as this, but, as a menagerie or circus, could not be considered in the light of a crowning succession."

"In conclusion the *Farmer* stated that, "The best of order prevailed during the day. Not a single case of drunkenness occurred."

The next report on Anderson & Company received in Topeka was a letter from Lewis Sells to his friend Capt. Terry, which received mention in the *Blade*, July 22. The letter was written from Sherburn, Minnesota, and the substance was that both of their shows would winter in Topeka. The information was confirmed by Peter Sells who was in Topeka.

*Research funded by grants from: Wolfe's Camera Shops, Inc., Topeka, Kansas and First National Bank of Kansas, Topeka.*

## BILL KASISKA'S LETTERHEADS



TOTO SIEGRIST

*Siegrist & Silbon Shows*



EDWARD SILBON

**AL T. HOLSTEIN**  
General Manager

**HAROLD BUSHEA**  
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Per. Address  
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New York City



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Diversified Amusement Exposition  
on Earth

The Siegrist-Silbon flying return act was featured on the Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth for a number of years at the turn of the century. It is believed that this letterhead was used by them on their own show around 1920. The Siegrist-Silbon show was a combination circus and carnival. A similar letterhead using the same title listed Carl J. Sedlmayr as sole owner and manager. This letterhead is printed in gold with a blue background around the title.

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